

**SAFAVID QUR'ÂNS: STYLE AND ILLUMINATION**

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to achieve something that has not been done before-to identify the style of illuminated Safavid Qur'âns. The first serious attempt to look critically at a wide spectrum of Qur'ân manuscripts dates from the famous World of Islam festival held in London in 1976, with its many exhibitions. Since then, hardly anything has been published specifically on Safavid Qur'âns. The major subsequent study on illuminated Qur'âns is that carried out by David James in his book entitled *Qur'âns of the Mamlûks* (1988). Most writings on Safavid Qur'âns have been in bits and pieces. The thin and ambiguous distinction between the style of 16th-17th century Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid Qur'ânic illumination adds to the tendency that scholars have evinced to skim over the problems. Many Qur'âns are without provenance; indeed, only a few have a clear provenance. Discussion thus tends to linger on secure by dated or provenanced examples of Qur'âns which possess full documentary information. The methods to be used in identifying these Qur'âns remain to be discovered by future researchers. To tackle all three schools of Qur'ânic illumination-Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal-would be too big a task. Even to concentrate on Safavid Qur'âns alone is itself a task that requires time, devotion, and, incidentally, strong financial support to arrive at a sufficiently detail analysis.

An initial survey of all three schools has been conducted for the purposes of this thesis on the basis of such primary and secondary sources as are to be found within the British Isles. This limitation, although it may seem arbitrary, has in fact stood the test of experience, for it has resulted in the accumulation of a representative but not unwieldy body of material. This materials has started with dated and/or provenanced Qur'âns; there were then followed by those with merely attributed dates and provenances. Numerous Qur'âns without documentary evidence to date or locate them were also studied for purposes of comparison and used whenever appropriate in the discussion. The key Qur'âns were then studied in depth and many detailed line drawings were made from original manuscripts, slides and colour plates. Besides the catalogues of the great libraries devoted to or including Arabic or Qur'ânic manuscripts, the Sotheby's and Christie's catalogues have been of great value for they provide an overview of what has been on the market over the past 20 years.

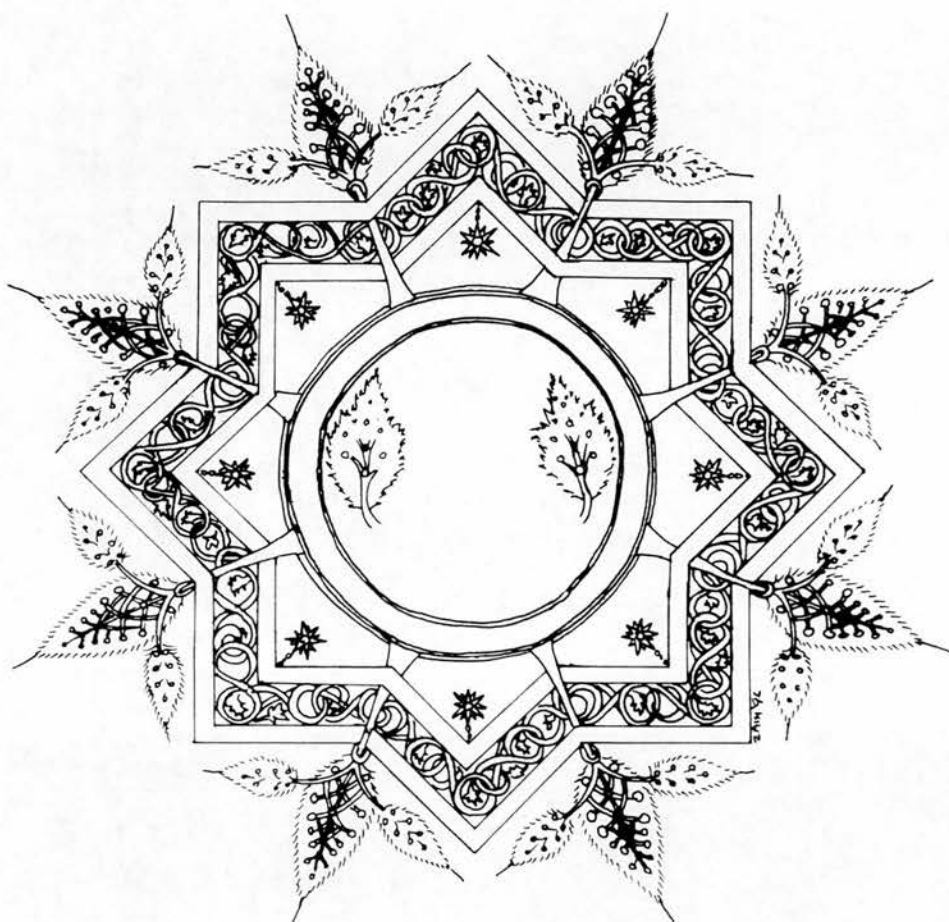
The analytical line drawings of this thesis may help to unveil the hidden formulae used in illuminated Safavid Qur'âns, and to establish key visual evidence for



the artistic vocabularies used by Safavid artists. As far as possible, Safavid illuminators observed earlier traditions in their development of a design. These detailed line drawings and coloured plates may help to achieve what verbal language cannot; "one picture tells a thousand words".

Far from establishing the style of any particular artist or schools, the research presented here is only the first step in laying down a broad definition of what makes a Safavid style. It also aims to establish some distinction between Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns. The findings are not, however, exhaustive, and in fact, they merely pave the way for the accumulation of yet more evidence which will fill in the areas already identified in this thesis for future researchers. The findings of this thesis may also act as a reference point for future research on this subject as well as on illuminated Qur'âns both before and after the Safavid period.

The thesis begins with brief information about the basic external form of the Qur'ân: for example, the division of the text into *âyat*, *sûrahs*, *juz'*, *manzil* and the *hizb*, *thulth*, *nişf* as well as *sajdah* marks. After this general formal "skeleton" of the Qur'ân, the main body of the thesis goes on to deal with such formal aspects as layout designs, *âyah*-markers, marginal designs, *shamsahs* (frontispieces), the significance of illuminated *âyat* and the types of scripts. The combination all these formal aspects defines the Safavid style of illuminated Qur'ân. The final chapter attempts a definition of the Safavid style by comparing it with those of Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns, keeping closely to the areas already discussed earlier as well as adding new areas to the discussion, such as the text block, the *ʿumwân* and the decoration surrounding the word *bismillâh*. The ultimate findings is that the style of the Safavid Qur'ân is relaxed, well-balanced and harmonious. The illumination in these Qur'âns follows the rules stipulated by tradition but incorporates mature and subtle innovation.



*To Nani, Za<sup>c</sup>im, Zuhayr, Zuhdi and Zufar,  
and  
in memory of my beloved father-in-law Haji Ibrahim b. Muḥammad  
(d. 14th July 1993)  
(...al-Fatihâh...).*

## Table of contents

Preface.....	ix
List of illustrations, figures, plates and tables.....	x
List of abbreviations.....	xxviii
List of transliterations .....	xxix
 <b>Chapter 1. Introduction.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
1. The Qur'ân illuminated.....	2
2 The formal structure of an illuminated Qur'ân.....	5
2.1 The 'predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân	
2.2 The 'non-predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân	
3. Brief historical and theoretical background.....	15
3.1 The setting	
3.2 The literary evidence	
4. The Qur'ân and the Man.....	23
 <b>Chapter 2.....</b>	 <b>37</b>
1. The idea of visual formalism in Safavid Qur'âns.....	38
2. The text block.....	49
3. The internal form.....	58
3.1 The concept of a double illuminated page	
3.2. The canon of page construction	
3.3. The arrangement of the page	
3.4. The design technique	
3.5. Ergonomic and Art	
4. The canon in colouring.....	90
4.1 The sequence of applying colours	
4.1.1 The first group: Structuring the design	
4.1.2 The second group: Colouring the design	
5. Preliminary conclusion.....	118
 <b>Chapter 3. The layout of an illuminated Safavid Qur'ân.....</b>	 <b>121</b>
1. Size.....	122
2. The margin.....	127
3. The development of page layout.....	132
3.1. Before the 10th century A.D.	
3.2. 10th to 15th centuries A.D.	
3.2.1. The plain frame	
3.2.2. The external decorated frame	

3.2.3. The 'spine ruling'	
3.2.4. The 'U-shaped' frame	
3.3. Qur'âns during the Safavid period	
3.3.1. Changes in the frame	
3.3.2. The zig-zag frame	
3.3.3. The 'spine ruling'	
3.3.4. The 'U-shaped' frame	
4. Preliminary conclusion.....	167
<b>Chapter 4</b> .....	170
1. Decorative design in the predetermined areas.....	171
1.1 The <i>âyah</i> -markers	
1.2 The underlying geometrical shape of the <i>âyah</i> -markers	
2 The <i>âyah</i> -markers in the pre-Safavid period.....	184
2.1 The letter-type design	
2.2 The organic-type design	
2.3 The geometric-type design	
2.4 The plant-type design	
3. The <i>âyah</i> -markers in the Safavid period.....	190
3.1 The organic-type design	
3.2 The organic-type design	
3.3 The plant-type design	
4 Preliminary conclusion.....	206
<b>Chapter 5</b> .....	207
1. The decorative marginal design.....	208
2. The <i>manzil</i> design.....	210
3. The <i>juz</i> ' design.....	213
4. The <i>hizb</i> design.....	223
4.1 The <i>rub</i> <sup>c</sup> design	
4.2 The <i>nisf</i> design	
4.3 The <i>thulth</i> design	
5. The <i>rukû</i> <sup>c</sup> design.....	243
6. The <i>khamsah</i> and <i>asharah</i> design.....	244
6.1. The pre-Safavid designs	
6.2. The Safavid designs	
7. The <i>sajdah</i> design.....	277
8. Preliminary conclusion.....	282
<b>Chapter 6</b> .....	284
1. The significance of illuminated <i>âyât</i> in the Safavid Qur'ân.....	285
2. The illuminated <i>âyah</i> .....	289
2.1 The first group of illuminated <i>âyât</i>	
2.2 The second group of illuminated <i>âyât</i>	
2.3. The third group of illuminated <i>âyât</i>	
2.4. The fourth group of illuminated <i>âyât</i>	
3. The illuminated word: Allâh.....	303

4 Illumination in relation to the size of the Qur'ân.....	308
5 Preliminary conclusion.....	309
<b>Chapter 7. The frontispieces and <i>shamsahs</i> of one-volume Qur'âns from the 11th to the 16th century, with special reference to their use of Qur'ânic texts.....</b>	<b>312</b>
1. The illuminated frontispieces of single-volume Qur'âns: the pre-Safavid period.....	313
2. The use of Qur'ânic texts in Safavid Qur'ânic frontispieces.....	317
2.1. The content of the Qur'ânic texts used in Safavid Qur'ânic frontispieces.....	351
3. The design of inscribed <i>shamsahs</i> .....	351
3.1. The design of uninscribed <i>shamsahs</i> .....	381
4. Preliminary Conclusion.....	381
<b>Chapter 8. Calligraphy and its aesthetic role in Safavid Qur'âns.....</b>	<b>384</b>
1. Background.....	385
2 Types of script.....	386
2.1. Qur'âns in the Kufic scripts, 8th-10th centuries	
2.2. Cursive scripts (11th-14th centuries): Qur'ân in the <i>muhaqqaq</i> script	
2.2.1. The combination technique	
2.3. The single-script technique in the 15th century	
2.3.1. The combination technique	
2.4. The single-script technique: Qur'âns in <i>nasta'liq</i>	
2.4.1. The standard script ( <i>naskh</i> )	
2.4.2. The combination of three scripts	
3. Writing as pattern.....	409
3.1. Letters as pattern	
3.2. Letters as pattern in Safavid Qur'âns	
3.3. Script as pattern in the Qur'ân: general considerations	
3.3.1. 11th-15th centuries	
3.3.2. Coloured scripts in Safavid Qur'âns	
4. The decorative background designs for text in Safavid Qur'âns.....	433
5. Preliminary conclusion.....	442
<b>Chapter 9. The definition of the Safavid style and its relation to Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns.....</b>	<b>447</b>
1. The setting.....	448
1.1. Securely dated and/or provenanced Qur'âns	
1.2. The case of illuminated Qur'âns	
2. Documentary evidence.....	458
3. Formal considerations.....	460
3.1. Colours	
3.2. Frame formats	
3.3. Text blocks	
3.4. <i>Unwâns</i>	

3.5. Scripts	
3.6. The <i>âyah</i> -markers	
3.6.1. The placement of <i>âyah</i> -markers	
3.6.2. Repetitive designs in <i>âyah</i> -markers	
3.6.3. Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal <i>âyah</i> -markers	
3.7. Marginal designs	
3.8. Plant motifs and the cloud-bands surrounding the word <i>bismillâh</i>	
4. Preliminary Conclusion.....	535
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>545</b>
Appendix I.....	564
Appendix II.....	568
Appendix III.....	570
Appendix IV.....	572
Bibliography.....	575



## Preface

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## Lists of figures, plates, illustrations and tables

### Chapter 1

#### Figures

1. Tile panels in the mosque of Ghars al-Dîn al-Khalîl al-Tawrîrî, Damascus.
2. Servant carrying a Qur'ân stand, German woodcut 1724 A.D.
3. Qur'ân stand made by the order of Ologh Beyg, Friday Mosque, Samarqand, ca. 1405-49. (Photo: Peter Brenner).
4. Carved Qur'ân *rahl* 1360/1941, Metropolitan Museum of Art.
5. Bihzad, *Khamsa* of Nizâmi, "Laila and Majnun at School" 900/1494.
6. *Khamsah* of Nizâmi, "Laila and Majnun at School" 931-2/1424-5. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. A gift of Alexander Smith Cochran.

#### Illustration

1. Hidden structural lines of a *rahl*.

### Chapter 2

#### Plates

1. A close-up of the word *waqf* in the head margin of a typical Qur'ân. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1539 (Arberry no. 165).
2. Commentaries written at the inner fore-edge margin and the tail margins of a Qur'ân. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
3. Commentaries written in red ink within the text block. British Library, OR. 1340.
4. The plant and animal motifs in the Qur'ân. (Glasgow University Library, Ms. GEN 1015).
5. *Sûrah* 19, from Eastern Turkey, dated 1166/1752. Sotheby's, 4 April 1978, lot 131.
6. Qur'ân from Deccan, datable 18th century. Sotheby's, 6 July 1981, lot 51.
7. *Sûrah* 1 and part of *Sûrah* 2. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no. 173).
8. *Sûrah* 1 spread over two pages. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
9. Part of *Sûrah* 2. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
10. The *Falnama* or *dua<sup>c</sup> i-khatam* in a Qur'ân. British Library, OR. 1341.
11. A 16th century Qur'ân. CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).
- 12a, b & c. Qur'ân, dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).
13. Decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
14. A 16th-century *khamsah* symbol. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

#### Illustrations

1. The plant and animal motifs in the Qur'ân. (Glasgow University Library, Ms. GEN 1015).

#### Figures

1. The form of the book (After Tschichold).
2. The form of the book (After Tschichold).
3. The form of the Qur'ân.
4. The form of the book and the Qur'ân.



- 5a. A calligrapher at work. 16th-century Turkish manuscript of *ʿAjaʿib al-Makhlûqât* (The Wonder of Creation) by al-Qazwîni. Y. H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pl.23.
- 5b. From Moghul manuscript, *Akhlâq-i Nâsirî* (The Ethics of Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî). Illustrated by Sanju for Emperor Akbar, ca. 1595. Ibid., pl.99.
- 5c. From an illustrated anthology of Persian poems dated 978-9/1570-1. Ibid., pl.102.
- 5d. Portrait of Shâh Abu'l-Maʿâlî by Dust Muhammad. S. C. Welch, *Treasure of Islam*, pl.118.
- 5e. From a Reza i-Abbâsi drawing, signed by Muʿîn i-Musavir, Isfâhân, dated 1087/1673. A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl.45.
- 6-12. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qurʾân. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no.156).
13. a, b and c. Line drawings from a 16th-century *khamseh* symbol. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

### Chapter 3

#### Illustration

1. The layout of a typical Qurʾân.

#### Tables

1. Measurement of the 13th-17th centuries A.D. Qurʾâns.
2. The percentage of the different sizes of Qurʾâns (16th-17th centuries A.D.)

#### Figures

##### 1a, nos. 1-10.

1. Khalili, KFQ18. Datable: 9th century or first half of 10th century A.D.
2. CBL Ms. 1449. Datable: 13th century A.D.
3. Khalili, QUR704. Date: 634-5/1236-7.
4. Khalili, QUR628. Date: 669-70/1270-1.
5. CBL Ms. 1453. Datable: 13th century A.D.
6. CBL Ms. 1468. Date: 729/1328.
7. Khalili, QUR242. ca 1336-1354 A.D., Shîrâz.
8. Khalili, QUR182. ca. 1336-1357 A.D., Shîrâz.
9. A.U.P. *Survey*, Boston Museum of Fine Art. Scribe: ʿAbd Allâh ibn Aḥmad ibn Fazl Allâh ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥamîd. Date: 739/1338, Marâghâ.
10. Khalili, QUR242. ca 1336-1354 A.D., Shîrâz.

##### 1b, nos. 11-19.

11. Khalili, QUR159. ca 1370-1400, Shîrâz.
12. Khalili, QUR212. Date: 823/1420, Shîrâz.
13. Lings, *QACI*, pl.81. Date: 828/1424.
14. Khalili, QUR642. Date: ca. 1430-1550 A.D., Herât.
15. Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 58. Date: 851/1447, Samarqand.
16. Christie's, 13 October 1982, lot 121. ca 1450-1500 A.D., Herât.
17. CBL Ms. 1518. Date: 869/1464.
18. CBL Ms. 1533. Date: 884-5/1479-80.
19. CBL Ms. 1502. Date: 888/1483.

**1c, nos. 20-22**

20. CBL Ms. 1519. Datable: 15th century A.D.
21. CBL Ms. 1500. Datable: 15th century A.D.
22. CBL Ms. 1519. Datable: 15th century A.D.

**2a, nos. 1-9**

1. Khalili, QUR56. ca 1500-1550 A.D., Herât or Shîrâz.
- 2 & 3. Khalili, QUR60. ca 1525-1550 A.D., Shîrâz.
4. Khalili, QUR441. ca 1525-1550 A.D., Shîrâz.
- 5 & 6. Khalili, QUR111. Date: 952-3/1545-6, Shîrâz.
7. CBL Ms. 1525. Date: 957/1550.
8. Khalili, QUR729. Date: 960/1552, Shîrâz or Qazwîn.
9. CBL Ms. 1540. Date: 962/1554.

**2b, nos. 1-7**

1. Sotheby's, 8 July 1980, lot 94. Date: 966/1558.
2. Khalili, QUR198. ca 1560-1575 A.D. Herât.
3. Khalili, QUR422. Date: 972-3/1564-5, Shîrâz.
4. Khalili, QUR63. Date: 972-3/1564-5.
5. CBL Ms. 1544. Date: 975-6/1567-8.
6. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 68. ca. 1500-1550 A.D.
7. Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191. Datable: 2nd half of 16th century.

**2c, nos. 1-7**

1. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222. Date: 1069/1658.
2. CBL Ms. 1554. Date: 1084/1673.
3. Sotheby's, 11 October 1982, lot 186. Datable: 1684 A.D. and later.
4. CBL Ms. 1553. Date: 1096/1684.
5. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 72. Date: 1096-7/1684-5.
6. Christie's, 16 October 1980, lot 31. Date: 1108/1696, Isfâhân.
7. Sotheby's, 1 June 1987, lot 97. Date: 1111/1699.

**3, nos. 1-9**

1. Christie's, 12 February 1988, lot 68. ca 1500-1550 A.D.
2. Khalili, QUR111. Scribe: Ruzbihan. Date: 952-3/1545-6, Shîrâz.
3. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69. Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alî Riza al-Abbâsi. Date: 995-6/1586-7, Qazwîn.
4. Sotheby's, 11 April 1988, lot 115. Scribe: Nûrallâh Muḥammad al-Lahijî al-Gilanî. Date 1000/1591.
5. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222. Date: 1069/1658.
6. CBL Ms. 1554. Date: 1084/1673.
7. Sotheby's, 11 October 1982, lot 186. Scribe: Ibn Mîrzâ Ibrâhîm Sayyid Aḥmad Tabâtabâ'i. Date: 1096/1684.
8. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260. Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥâshîm (al-Tayîr). Date: 1100/1688.
9. Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191. Datable: 2nd half of 16th century A.D.
- 10a. James, *QM*, Fig. 110. Scribe: Arghûn al-Kâmilî and illuminated by Muḥammad ibn Sayf al-Dîn. Datable 14th century A.D.
- 10b. CBL Ms. 1554. Date: 1084/1673.

**4a, nos. 1-9**

1. Khalili, QUR242. ca. 1336-1354 A.D.

2. CBL Ms. 1519. Datable: 15th century A.D.
3. Khalili, QUR60. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Tab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shîrâzî. ca 1525-1550 A.D.
4. Khalili, QUR441. ca 1525-1550 A.D.
5. Khalili, QUR111. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Tab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shîrâzî.  
Date: 952-3/1545-6.
6. CBL Ms. 1525. ca 1550 A.D., Shîrâz.
7. Khalili, QUR206. ca 1550-1600 A.D.
8. Khalili, QUR729. Date: 960/1552, Shîrâz or Qazwîn.
9. Khalili, QUR198. Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Jabbâr ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-<sup>c</sup>Azîz. ca 1560-75 A.D.

#### **4b, nos. 1-8**

1. Khalili, QUR422. Scribe: (Jamâl al-Dîn) Ḥusain al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî.  
Date: 972-3/1564-5.
2. CBL Ms. 1544. Scribe: Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmud. Date: 975-6/1567-8.
3. Khalili, QUR625. Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqaddam. Date: 979/1571.
4. CBL Ms. 1553. Scribe: Mîrzâ Ahmad. Date: 1096/1684.
5. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 72. Scribe: Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî.  
Date: 1096/1684-5.
6. Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193. Scribe: Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî.  
Date: 1101/1689.
7. Christie's, 10 October 1980, lot 31. Scribe: Aḥmad al-Nirîzî. Date: 1108/1696,  
Isfâhân.
8. Sotheby's, 1 June 1987, lot 97. Scribe: Muḥammad Ibrâhîm al-Qumî.  
Date: 1111/1699.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Figures.**

1. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154). 16th-century Qur'ân (left). The placement of *âyah*-markers.
2. Geometric shapes in architecture.
- 3a. Ceiling of the tomb of Ḥâfiẓ at Shîrâz. Michell, *Architecture*, 149.
- 3b. Masjid-i-Jâmi', Isfâhân, Vault no. 42, 14th century. After Ugo Monneret de Villard. A. U. P., *Survey*, 1286.
- 3c. Dish, fritware, with underglaze painting in blue. Persian (Kirmân), 18th century.  
Height 5.2 cm., diameter 26.3 cm. Watson, 'Ceramics', 217.
- 4a. Snow Crystal after Colman. Colman, *Nature's*, p.87, pl.56.
- 4b. Loosestrife after Colman. Ibid., p.109, pl.89.
- 4c. Trochus, Underside after Colman. Ibid., p.139, pl.121.
- 4d. Diatom after Colman. Ibid, p.143, pl.127 G.

### **Âyah-markers (before the Safavid period)**

- 5a.1. Khalili, QUR583. Iran, ca. 1250-1300 A.D.
- 5a.2. CBL Ms. 1449 (Arberry no. 133). Datable: 13th century A.D. Persian Qur'ân.
- 5a.3. CBL Ms. 1453 (Arberry no. 132). Datable: 13th century A.D. Persian Qur'ân.
- 5a.4. Khalili, QUR495. Iran, ca. 1250-1350 A.D.
- 5a.5-9. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, E.H. 74, ff. 109v-110r. Scribe: Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>sîmî, 693/1294, Iraq.

- 5a.10-12. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, E.H. 245 ff. 7v-8r. Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Ayybak, Dated: 707/1307, Baghdad, for the II-Khānīd Sultān Ūljāyṭū.
- 5b.13. Khalili, QUR472. Iraq, perhaps Mosul, ca. 1300-1320 A.D. Scribe: perhaps <sup>c</sup>Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Zayd al-Ḥusaynī.
- 5b.14. Khalili, QUR162. Iraq, probably Baghdad, ca. 1313-1325 A.D.
- 5b.15. Khalili, QUR474. Iran, ca. 1320-1330 A.D.
- 5b.16. Khalili, QUR181. Shīrāz, 1336-1375 A.D.
- 5b.17. Khalili, QUR480. Iran, ca. 1370-1400 A.D.
- 5b.18-21. CBL Ms.1518 (Arberry no. 140). Dated: 868/1464. Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn <sup>c</sup>Imrān al-Ḥanafī.
- 5b.22 & 23. CBL Ms.1610 (Arberry, no. 151). Datable 15th century A.D.
- 5b.24. Khalili, QUR95. Iran. Datable: 15th century A.D.
- 5c.25. CBL Ms.1511 (Arberry, no. 141). Dated: 873/1467. Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Abd Allāh al-Ṭabbākh al-Ḥarāwī.
- 5c.26. CBL Ms.1500 (Arberry, no. 143). Datable: 15th century A.D.
- 5c.27. CBL Ms.1520 (Arberry no. 145). Datable: 15th century A.D.
- 5c.28. Khalili QUR95. Iran. Datable: 15th century A.D.
- 5c.29-32. CBL Ms.1610-[1, 3, & 6] (Arberry, no. 151). Datable: 15th century A.D.
- 5c.33. Khalili QUR438. Iraq or Iran, ca. 1350-1420 A.D. Scribe: perhaps Karamshāh Ṭabrīzī.
- 5c.34. Mashhad Shrine Library, 414, ff. 1v-2r. Scribe: Ibrāhīm Sultān ibn Shāh Rukh ibn Ṭīmūr. Dated: 827/1424, Persia.
- Safavid āyah-markers.**
- 6a.1. CBL Ms.1547 (Arberry, no. 163). Datable 16th century A.D.
- 6a.2. Sotheby's, 11th Oct. 1982, Lot. 186. Persia. Datable; 1096/1684 and later.
- 6a.3. CBL Ms.1548 (Arberry, no. 164). Datable: late 16th century A.D.
- 6a.4. CBL Ms.1547 (Arberry, no. 163). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6b(i).5 & 6. CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry, no. 156). Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Ṭab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shīrāzī. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6b(i).7. Khalili QUR422. Scribe: (Jamāl al-Dīn) Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shīrāzī) Shīrāz. Dated: 972/1564-5.
- 6b(ii).8. CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry, 156). Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Ṭab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shīrāzī. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6b(ii).9 & 10. CBL Ms.1538 (Arberry, no. 160). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6b(iii).11. CBL Ms.1547 (Arberry, no. 163). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6b(iii).12. CBL Ms.1525 (Arberry, no. 157). ca. 1550 A.D.
- 6b(iii).13-15. CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry, no. 156). Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Ṭab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shīrāzī. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 6c.16. CBL Ms.1579 (Arberry, no. 181). Datable: 18th century A.D.
- 6c.17. CBL Ms.1561 (Arberry, no. 177). Dated: 1125/1713.
- 6c.18. CBL Ms.1518 (Arberry, no. 140). Datable: late 16th century A.D.
- 6c.19. Khalili QUR60. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Ṭab<sup>c</sup>ī Shīrāzī. Shīrāz. Datable: 1525-1550 A.D.
- 7a.1. CBL Ms.1547 (Arberry, no. 163). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7a.2 & 3. CBL Ms.1538 (Arberry, no. 160). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7a.4. CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry, no. 153). Dated: 962/1554.
- 7a.5. Rieu 1879, Add. 23,252 (Or.1340). Datable: 16th century A.D.

- 7a.6. Khalili QUR60. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Tab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâz.  
Datable: 1525-1550 A.D.
- 7a.8. CBL Ms.1554 (Arberry, no. 172). Isfâhân. Dated: 1084/1673.
- 7b(i).9. CBL Ms.1554 (Arberry, no. 172). Dated: 1084/1673.
- 7b(i).10. Rieu 1879, (Or.1341 & 1342). Scribe: <sup>ḥ</sup>Abdul-<sup>ḥ</sup>Azîm al-Rizâwî. Datable:  
16th century A.D.
- 7b(i).11. CBL Ms.1534 (Arberry, no. 155). Dated: 982-3/1574-5.
- 7b(i).12. London, British Library, Rieu 1879, (Or.1341 & 1342). Scribe: <sup>ḥ</sup>Abdul-  
<sup>ḥ</sup>Azîm al-Rizâwî. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7b(i).13. Sotheby's, 12 Oct. 1990, Lot. 222. Dated: 1069/1688.
- 7b(i).14. Sotheby's, 20 July 1977, Lot. 244. Dated: 1011/1602.
- 7b(i).15. CBL Ms.1548 (Arberry, no. 164). Datable: late 16th century A.D.
- 7b(i).16. CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry, no. 156). Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) Tab<sup>ḥ</sup> al-  
Shîrâzî. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7b(ii).17. CBL Ms.1550 (Arberry, no. 174). Datable: early 17th century A.D.
- 7b(ii).18. CBL Ms.1538 (Arberry, no. 160). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7b(ii).19. London, British Library, Loth 1877, (MSS. Arabic. Loth 19/1383). Scribe:  
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad. Datable: 17th century A.D.
- 7b(ii).20. CBL Ms.1542 (Arberry, no. 161). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7b(iv).21. CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry, no. 153). Dated: 962/1554.
- 7b(iv).22. CBL Ms.1537 (Arberry, no. 159). ca. 1550 A.D.
- 7b(iv).23. Khalili QUR56. Herât or Tabrîz. ca. 1500-1550 AD.
- 7b(iv).24. CBL Ms.1544 (Arberry, no. 154). Dated: 975-6/1567-8.
- 7c(i).25. CBL Ms.1573 (Arberry, no. 180). Datable: 18th century.
- 7c(i).26. Sotheby's, 12 Oct. 1990, Lot. 222. Dated: 1069/1658.
- 7c(i).27. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, Lot. 203. Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7c(i).28. Khalili QUR494. Shîrâz, ca. 1525-1550 AD.
- 7c(i).29. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, HS 25, ff. 1v-2r. Scribe: Shâh Maḥmûd al-  
Nîshâpûrî, 945/1538-9, probably Tabrîz.
- 7c(ii).30 & 31. CBL Ms.1547 (Arberry, no. 163). Datable: 16th century A.D.
- 7c(ii).32. CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry, no. 156). Datable: late 16th century A.D.
- 8.33-35. CBL Ms.1554 (Arberry, no. 172). Isfâhân. Dated: 1084/1673.

## Chapter 5

### Figures

#### *Manzîl* design

1. Scribe: Shagird. Datable: 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

#### *Juz'* design

- 2a. 1 & 2. 14th century. CBL Ms. 1475 (Arberry no. 184).
- 2a. 3 & 4. Dated 872/1467. CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no. 141).
- 2b. 5. Dated 872/1467. CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no. 141).
- 2b. 6. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no. 145).
- 2c. 7. Datable late 16th century. CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).
- 2c. 8. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1524 (Arberry no. 169).
- 2d. 9 & 10. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no. 161).
- 2d. 11. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1579 (Arberry no. 181).
- 2d. 12. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no. 180).



### ***Hizb* design**

- 3a. 1. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no. 145).
- 3a. 2. Dated 872/1467. CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no. 141).
- 3b. 3. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
- 3b. 4. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no. 161).
- 3c. 5. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
- 3c. 6. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
- 3d. 7. Dated: 1125/1713. CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no. 177).
- 3d. 8. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no. 180).

### ***Rubʿ* design**

- 4.1. Scribe: Shagird. 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).
- 4.2. Khalili, QUR605. James, *AT*, pl.15.

### ***Nisf* design**

- 5a. 1. Dated 872/1467. CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no. 141).
- 5a. 2. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no. 145).
- 5b. 3. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
- 5b. 4. Datable late 16th century. CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).
- 5c. 5. Datable early 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).
- 5c. 6. Dated: 1125/1713. CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no. 177).
- 5d. 7. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no. 180).
- 5d. 8. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1579 (Arberry no. 181).
- 5d. 9. 18th century. CBL Ms. 1572 (Arberry no. 179).

### ***Thulth* design**

- 6a & b. Scribe: Shagird. 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

### ***Rukūʿ* design**

- 7.1. Ottoman Qurʾān. Dated: 969/1561-2. Cairo. Khalili, QUR627. James, *AT*, 238.
- 7.2. Scribe: Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Ḥafīẓ Muḥammad ʿAfi. Dated: 1114/1702. Mingana, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts*, 48.

### **Written *khamseh* and *ʿasharah* design**

- 8a. 1 and 2. 13th century. CBL Ms. 1449 (Arberry no. 133).
- 8a. 3 and 4. 13th century. CBL Ms. 1453 (Arberry no. 132).
- 8b. 5 - 8. Dated 729/1328. CBL Ms. 1468 (Arberry no. 136).
- 8c. 9-10. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no. 145).
- 8d. 11-12. 13th century. CBL Ms. 1453 (Arberry no. 132).
- 8d. 13. Dated 701-2/1301-2. CBL Ms. 1467 (Arberry no. 135).
- 8d. 14. Dated 729/1328. CBL Ms. 1468 (Arberry no. 136).
- 8e. 15. Dated 729/1328. CBL Ms. 1468 (Arberry no. 136).
- 8e. 16. Dated 739/1338. CBL Ms. 1470 (Arberry no. 137).
- 8e. 17 and 18. Dated 872/1467. CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no. 141).
- 8e. 19. Dated 884-5/1479-80. CBL Ms. 1533 (Arberry no. 142).
- 8f. 20. Dated 884-5/1479-80. CBL Ms. 1533 (Arberry no. 142).
- 8f. 21. Dated 888/1483. CBL Ms. 1502 (Arberry no. 147).
- 8f. 22. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1521 (Arberry no. 146).
- 8f. 23 and 24. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1519 (Arberry no. 144).
- 8f. 25. 15th century. CBL Ms. 1521 (Arberry no. 146).
- 9a. 1 and 2. ca. 1525-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR251.
- 9b. 5 and 6. Dated 967/1559-60. Khalili, QUR3.

- 9b. 7 and 8. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).
- 9c. 9 and 10. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
- 9d. 11. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no. 161).
- 9d. 12. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1538 (Arberry no. 160).

#### **Unwrittend *khamseh* and *‘asharah* designs**

- 9e. 1. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
- 9e. 2. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
- 9e. 3 and 4. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1524 (Arberry no. 169).
- 9f. 5. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163).
- 9f. 6. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
- 9f. 7. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).
- 9g. 8. Mid 16th century. CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).
- 9g. 9. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).
- 9g. 10 and 11. Dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).
- 9h. 12. Dated 975-6/1567-8. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
- 9h. 13. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1538 (Arberry no. 160).
- 9i. 14 and 15. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
- 9i. 16. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).
- 9j. 17 and 18. Dated 975-6/1567-8. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

#### ***Sajdah* designs**

- 10. 1 and 2. 13th century. CBL Ms. 1453 (Arberry no. 132).
- 11. 1. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
- 11. 2. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
- 12. 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

#### **Plates**

- 1. Shâh Tahmâsp's (Quintet) *Khamseh* of Nizâmî f. 1v. Datable: 1540. Welch, *Wounders*, 134.
- 2. *Sa‘di* Bûstân from Tabriz. 15th century. Soudavar, *Art*, 136.
- 3. Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Museum, 439. Lings, *QAIC*, pl.33.
- 4. Khalili, QUR162. James, *MS*, pl.24.
- 5. Ceramic piece. 17th century. Iran. Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery*, pl.93a.
- 6. Steel standards. 17th century. Iran. Welch, *Calligraphy*, pp.148-9. *Arts of Islam*, catalogue of an Exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, no.236.
- 7. Metal mortar. Late 12th to early 13th century. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, 159.
- 8. Ceramic piece. Kirman. 17th century. Diman, *Hand Book*, 150.
- 9 and 10. Khalili, QUR729. Dated: 959/1552. Shîrâz or Qazwîn.
- 11. A pigeon tower at Linjân, near Pîr-i Bakrân. Ferrier, *Art of Persia*, 110.
- 12. 1 & 2. Khalili, QUR441. Shîrâz. ca. 1525-1550 A.D.
- 13. 1 & 2. Khalili, QUR441. Shîrâz. ca. 1525-1550 A.D.
- 14. 1 & 2. Khalili, QUR231. Shîrâz or Qazwîn. 16th century A.D.
- 15. Khalili, Shîrâz. Dated: 972/1564-5.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Table**

- 1. The illuminated *âyât* in the Qur’ân.

## Chapter 7

### Plates

1. The frontispiece from a part 2 of a 30-part Qur'ân. North Africa or Egypt, end of the 9th century A.D. Khalili, QUR372.
2. The Ardabil carpet. Signed by Maqṣūd of Kashân and dated 946/1539-40. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
3. Safavid 'Hunting' carpet, dated 929/1522. Milan.
4. Qur'ân Cover. Iran. 16th Century A.D. CBL MS. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
5. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Iran or Iraq. Dated 634/1236-7 Khalili, QUR704.
6. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 14th century A.D. CBL MS. 1470 (Arberry no. 137).
7. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Istanbul, ca. 1460-1470 A.D. Khalili, QUR34.
8. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Illuminated by Muḥammad ibn Mubâdir, Cairo, ca. 1306-10 A.D. CBL MS. 1457 (Arberry no.60).
9. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Egypt, 844/1440. Scribe: ʿAbdallâh Yusuf ibn Baha-yi al-Dîn al-Shafiʿî al-Misri. Khalili, QUR241.
10. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D. CBL MS. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).
11. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 982-983/1574-5. Scribe: Tâqî al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Muṭahhar. CBL MS. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
12. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 975-976/1567-8. Scribe: Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd. CBL MS. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
13. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D. CBL MS. 1547 (Arberry no. 163).
14. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Late 16th century A.D. CBL MS. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).
15. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tabṣī al-Shîrâzî. CBL MS. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
16. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. ca. 1525 A.D. JRULM 44(754).
17. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. ca. 16th century A.D. JRULM 45(797).
18. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Probably Herât, ca 1490-1510 A.D. Khalili, QUR323.
19. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Istanbul ca 1550-1560 A.D. Khalili, QUR420.
20. Illuminated frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Probably 1550 A.D. CBL MS. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).
21. *Debacha* from a *Dîwân* of Amîr Khusraw Dihlawî. Shîrâz, dated 834/1430-31.
22. *Debacha* from a *Dîwân* of Qasîm. Iran, dated 863/1458-59.
23. Cloud Collar. Iran, ca. 1400-1450 A.D.
24. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Iran, ca. 1550 A.D. Formely Vever Collection. s86.0082, s86.0083.
25. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Turkey, dated 959/1552.



26. *Shamsah* design from The *Bustân* of Sa<sup>c</sup>đi. Scribe <sup>c</sup>Abdul Rahmân al-Ḥarazmî. Tabrîz, ca. 1478 A.D.
27. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Uzbekistan, Samarqand, dated 994/1585-6.
28. The *shamsah* page from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century (?), San<sup>c</sup>â' National Museum.
- 29 and 30. Frontispiece or finispiece from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century (?) San<sup>c</sup>â' National Museum.
31. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. CBL MS. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
32. Carpet-page from a single-volume Qur'ân. CBL MS. 1500 (Arberry no.43).
33. Carpet-page from a single-volume Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Tabrîz, ca. 1475-1500 A.D. Khalili, QUR128.

## Figures

1. Reconstruction of plate 28. The *shamsah* page from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century, San<sup>c</sup>â' National Museum.
- 2 & 3. Reconstruction of plates 29 and 30 (based from Oleg Grabar's drawing but with added lamps within the arches and borders). Frontispiece or finispiece from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century, San<sup>c</sup>â' National Museum.

## Chapter 8

### Plates

1. London, British Library, Or. 1397.
2. CBL Ms. 1471.
3. Khalili, QUR473.
4. Khalili, QUR850.
5. Khalili, QUR34.
6. Khalili, QUR128.
7. Khalili, QUR95.
8. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, HS25.
9. Khalili, QUR111.
10. Khalili, QUR625.
11. Khalili, QUR178.
12. Mashhad Shrine Library, no. 418.
13. Khalili, QUR422.
14. Khalili, QUR484. 1-2.
15. Khalili, QUR289 and QUR229.
16. Khalili, QUR251.
17. CBL Ms 1531 (Arberry no. 158).
18. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
19. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

### Illustrations

1. Hidden structure of the letter pattern in a single folio of the 9th-century Qur'ân. Khalili, KFQ68.

2. Hidden structure in the letter pattern of a page in the Qur'ân copied by (Jamâl al-Dîn) Husayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shirâzî. Dated 972/1564-5, Shîrâz. Khalili, QUR422.
3. Hidden structure in the letter pattern of a *nastâ'liq* Qur'ân. Copied by Shâh Maḥmûd al-Nishâpûrî, dated 945/1538-9. Probably from Tabrîz. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library HS 25.
4. Nos. 1-6. Background designs for Qur'ânic texts (11th-15th centuries).
  - 4.1. Qur'ân. North Western Iran, ca. 1175-1225 A.D. Khalili, QUR87.
  - 4.2. Qur'ân. Iraq or Iran, 634/1236-7. Khalili, QUR704.
  - 4.3. Qur'ân. Iraq. Probably Baghdad. Dated 681/1282-3. Khalili, QUR29.
  - 4.4. Qur'ân. Copied by Muḥammad ibn... ibn...Ibrâhîm ibn ʿAbd al Rahmân al-Maydumi. Mamlûk. Cairo. Dated 729/1329. Khalili, QUR317.
  - 4.5. Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Tabrîz, ca 1475-1500 A.D. Khalili, QUR128.
  - 4.6. Qur'ân. Herât, ca 1430-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR642.
5. Nos. 1-10. Background designs for text in Safavid Qur'âns.
  - 5.1. Qur'ân. Herât, ca. 1490-1510 A.D. Khalili, QUR323.
  - 5.2. Qur'ân. Herât or Tabrîz, ca. 1500-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR56.
  - 5.3. Qur'ân. Herât. Dated 967/1559-60. Khalili, QUR3.
  - 5.4. Qur'ân. Copied by (Nûr al-Dîn) Muḥammad Husayn ibn Muhyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harâwî. Bukhârâ or Herât. Dated 944/1537-8. Khalili, QUR114.
  - 5.5. Qur'ân. Iran. 16th century A.D. Khalili, QUR130.
  - 5.6. Qur'ân. Herât or Tabrîz, ca. 1525-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR251.
  - 5.7. Qur'ân. Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tabîʿi al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâz. Dated 952/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111.
  - 5.8. Qur'ân. Shîrâz, ca 1525-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR441.
  - 5.9. Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Qazwîn. 16th century A.D. QUR231.
  - 5.10. Qur'ân. Probably Herât, ca 1600 A.D. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985. Lot 34.

## Chapter 9

### Plates.

1. Safavid Qur'ân. Early 16th century A.D. Christie's, 10 October 1989, lot 316.
2. Safavid Qur'ân, ca. 1500-1550 A.D. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 68.
3. Safavid Qur'ân. Scribe: ʿAli Riza al-ʿAbbâsi Qazwîn. Dated 995/1586-87. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69.
4. Ottoman Qur'ân, ca. 1550 A.D. Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 92.
5. Ottoman Qur'ân. Dated 999/1590. Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 340.
6. Mughal Qur'ân. Scribe: Ibn ʿAlî Aḥmad al-Sharîf. 2nd half of the 16th century. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 234.
7. Safavid Qur'ân. 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545. Lings, *QACI*, pl.90.
8. Safavid Qur'ân. Scribe: Asadullâh b. Muḥammad al-Kashânî. Dated 967/1560. Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.
9. Safavid Qur'ân, ca. 1580 A.D. Christie's, 27-29 April 1993, lot 36.
10. Ottoman Qur'ân. Scribe: ʿAbdullâh al-Qirîmî. Dated 973/1565-6. Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 63.
11. Ottoman Qur'ân. Dated 983/1575. Sotheby's, 13 October 1980, lot 138.
12. Ottoman Qur'ân. Scribe: Muṣṭafa al-Hîlmî. Dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.

13. Flower designs in Qur'âns.
  - a). Ottoman Qur'ân. Dated 983/1575. Sotheby's, 13 October 1980, lot 138.
  - b). Ottoman Qur'ân. Scribe: Muṣṭafa al-Ḥilmî. Dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.
  - c). Safavid Qur'ân. Dated 952/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111.
14. Ottoman Qur'ân. Scribe: Dâwûd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh. Dated 985/1577. Khalili, QUR214.
15. Mughal Qur'ân, ca. 1590 A.D. Sotheby's, 22-23 October 1992, lot 581.

## Tables.

1. Table A, i, ii and iii. Types of scripts in the main text of 16th-century Qur'âns.
2. Table B, i and ii. Types of scripts in the main text of 17th-century Qur'âns.
3. Table C i and ii. Percentages in the usage of scripts in the main text of 16th-17th century Qur'âns.

## Figures

### 1a. Frame formats

#### Safavid

- D.1 - Qur'ân copied in 959/1552, from Shîrâz or Qazwîn. Khalili, QUR729. James, *AT*, pl.43.
- D.2.1 - Scribe: (Nûr al-Dîn) Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Muhyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harâwî. Dated 944/1537-8, from Bukhârâ or Herât. Khalili, QUR114. James, *AT*, pl.33.
- D.2.3 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muḥammad Muqaddam from Karbala. Dated 993/1585. Khalili, QUR625. See James, *AT*, pl.49.
- D.3.1 - Scribe: Ḥusayn al-Shirâzî. Dated 961/1553. Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.
- D.3.2 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alî Riza al-<sup>c</sup>Abbâsi from Qazwîn. Dated 995/1686-7. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69.
- D.3.3 - Scribe: (Jamâl al-Dîn) Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî. Dated 972/1564-5. Khalili, QUR422. James, *AT*, pl.45.
- D.4 - Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>c</sup>î al-Shîrâzî. Dated 952/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pl.39.
- D.4.1 - Scribe: Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd. Dated 975-6/1567-8. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

#### Mughal

- D.2.3 - Scribe: Muḥammad Asghâr b. Manṣûr al-Ḥusaini. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

#### Ottoman

- D.1 - Scribe: Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafa Dede ibn Ḥamdullâh. Dated 985/1551. Khalili, QUR533. James, *AT*, pl.57.
- D.2 - Qur'ân dated 938/1531-2. Khalili, QUR82. James, *AT*, pl.54.
- D.2.4 - Scribe: Ḥassan. Dated 996/1587. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.
- D.3 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa ibn Naṣûh al-Selânikî. Dated 912/1506-7. Khalili, QUR429. James, *AT*, pl.55.

- D.3.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Wali al-Daḡṡarī. Dated 1000/1591. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44.
- D.3.2 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Rahmān al-Maghluwī. Dated 973/1565. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.
- D.3.6 - Scribe: Muḥammad b. <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh al-Nīshāpūrī. Dated 948/541. Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.
- D.3.7 - Scribe: Iskandar b. <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh. Dated 976/1568. Sotheby's, 13 October 1981, lot 275.

## 1b. Frame formats

### Safavid

- D.3.4 - Scribe: Muḥammad Meḡdī al-Katib al-Mashādī. Dated 1011/1602. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 35.
- D.3.5 - Qur'ān from Isfāhān. Dated 1084/1673. CBL Ms. 1554.
- D.3.9 - Qur'ān dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.
- D.4.2 - Scribe: Mīrza Aḡmad. Dated 1096/1684. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no. 173).
- D.4.3 - Scribe: Muḥammad Riza al-Shīrāzī. Dated 1101/1689. Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193.
- D.4.4 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥāshīm (al-Tayir). Dated 1100/1688. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.

### Mughal

- D.1.2 - Scribe: Maḡṡūd <sup>c</sup>Alī. Dated 1092/1681. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.
- D.2.3 - Scribe: Muḥammad Asghār ibn Maṡṡūr al-Ḥusaini. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.
- D.2.5 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥusain Shīrāzī. Dated 1037/1627. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

### Ottoman

- D.3.3 - Scribe: Muṡṡafa ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balḡrādī. Dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.
- D.3.7 - Scribe: Muṡṡafa al-Ḥīlmī. Dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.
- D.3.8 - Scribe: Muṡṡafa ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balḡrādī. Dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.
- D.3.8 - Scribe: Ḥāfīz <sup>c</sup>Uthmān. Dated 1082/1671. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.

## 2a. Text blocks

### Safavid

- B.1.2.2 - Scribe: (Nūr al-Dīn) Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Muḡyī ('l-Dīn) Harāwī. Bukhārā or Herāt. Dated 944-5/1537-8. Khalili, QUR114. James, *AT*, pl.33.
- B.1.2.2 - Scribe: Aḡmad ibn Nī<sup>c</sup>matallāh. Dated 967-8/1559. Khalili, QUR3. James, *AT*, pl.32.
- B.4.1 - Scribe: Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>c</sup>ī al-Shīrāzī. Dated 952/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111. James, *AT*, pl.39.
- B.4.2 - Qur'ān from Shīrāz or Qazwīn. Dated 960/1552. Khalili, QUR729. James, *AT*, pl.43.

B.4.2 - Scribe: Ḥusayn al-Shīrāzī. Dated 961/1553. Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.

#### **Ottoman**

B.1 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa ibn Naṣūh al-Selānikī. Dated 912/1506-7. Khalili, QUR429. James, *AT*, pl.55.

B.1 - Scribe: Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafa Dede ibn Ḥamdullāh. Istanbul. Dated 958/1551. Khalili, QUR533. James, *AT*, pl.57.

B.1.3 - Qur'ān dated 938/1531-2. Khalili, QUR82. James, *AT*, pl.54.

B.1.3 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh al-Nishāpūrī. Dated 948/1541. Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.

B.4 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Rahmān al-Maghluwī. Dated 973/1565. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.

#### **2b**

##### **Safavid**

B.4.1 - Scribe: Muzaffar ibn Aḥmad ibn Muzaffar ibn Kamāl ibn <sup>c</sup>Iwad ibn Muzaffar ibn Shams al-Dīn Ḥassan Amīrah ibn Nasīr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṭūṣī. Dated 972-3/1564-5. Khalili, QUR63. James, *AT*, pl.50.

B.4.1 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alī Riza al-<sup>c</sup>Abbāsi. Qazwīn. Dated 995/1586-7. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69.

B.4.3 - Scribe: Asadullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Kashānī. Dated 967/1560. Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.

B.4.4 - Scribe: Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shīrāzī. Dated 972/1564-5. Khalili, QUR422. James, *AT*, pl.45.

B.4.4 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Alī ibn Muḥammad Muqaddam. Karbala. Dated 993/1585. Khalili, QUR96. James, *AT*, pl.51.

##### **Mughal**

B.1.2.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad Asghār ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥusaini. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

##### **Ottoman**

B.1.2 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh al-Qirīmī. Dated 973/1565-6. Sotheby's 21 November 1985, lot 339.

B.1.2 - Scribe: Ḥassan. Dated 996/1587. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.

B.1.4 - Scribe: Maḥmud ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Walī al-Daftārī. Dated 1000/1591. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44.

B.2 - Scribe: Dāwūd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh. Dated 976/1577. Khalili, QUR214. James, *AT*, pl.60.

#### **2c**

##### **Safavid**

B.1.1 - Qur'ān dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.

B.1.5 - Scribe: Muḥammad Mehdi al-Katib al-Mashādī. Dated 1011/1602. Sotheby's, 6 June 1985, lot 35.

B.2.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad Zamān al-Ḥusaini al-Kirmānī. Dated 1076-7/1665-6. Christie's, 27 April 1993, lot 34.

B.3.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥāshim (al-Tayir). Dated 1100/1688. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.



## Mughal

- B.2.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî. North India. Dated 1037/1627. Sotheby's, 22 October 1989, lot 94.  
B.2.2 - Scribe: Maqṣûd <sup>c</sup>Alî. Dated 1092/1681. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

## Ottoman

- B.1.5 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî. Dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.  
B.1.5 - Scribe: Ḥâfîz <sup>c</sup>Uthmân. Dated 1082/1671. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 347.  
B.3 - Scribe: Ibn Qasîm <sup>c</sup>Alî Muhsin al-Nîshâpûrî. Dated 1099/1687. Sotheby's 15 April 1985, lot 225.

## 3a. <sup>c</sup>Unwâns

### Safavid

- U.2.1 - Scribe: (Nûr al-Dîn) Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Muhyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harâwî. Bukhârâ or Herât. Dated 944-5/1537-8. Khalili, QUR114. James, *AT*, pl.33.  
U.5 - Qur'ân from Shîrâz or Qazwîn. Dated 960/1552. Khalili, QUR729. James, *AT*, pl.43.  
U.5.2 - Scribe: Ḥusayn al-Shîrâzî. Shirâz. Dated 961/1553. Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.  
U.5.4 - Scribe: Aḥmad ibn Ni<sup>c</sup>matallâh. Herât. Dated 967-8/1559-60. Khalili, QUR3. James, *AT*, pl. 32.

## Mughal

- U.5.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

## Ottoman

- U.1 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa ibn Naṣûh al-Selânîkî. Dated 1506-7. Khalili, QUR429. James, *AT*, pl.55.  
U.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî. Dated 973/1565. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.  
U.1 - Scribe: Maḥmûd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Walî al-Daftârî. Dated 1000/1591. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44.  
U.1.1 - Scribe: Muḥammad ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Nîshâpûrî. Dated 948/1541. Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.  
U.1.1 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Qirîmî. Dated 973/1565-6. Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 63.  
U.2 - Qur'ân dated 938/1531-2. Khalili, QUR82. James, *AT*, pl.54.  
U.3 - Scribe: Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafa Dede ibn Ḥamdullâh. Istanbul. Dated 958/1551. Khalili, QUR533. James, *AT*, pl.57.  
U.4 - Scribe: Dâwûd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh. Dated 985/1577. Khalili, QUR214. James, *AT*, pl.60.  
U.5.3 - Scribe: Ḥassan. Dated 996/1587. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.

### 3b

#### Safavid

- U.2.3 - Scribe: Muḥammad Meḥdī al-Katib al-Mashādī. Dated 1602. Sotheby's, 6 June 1985, lot 35.
- U.2.4 - Qur'ān dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.
- U.2.4 - Scribe: Mīrza Aḥmad. Dated 1096/1684. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no. 173).
- U.2.5 - Scribe: Muḥammad Zamān al-Ḥusaini al-Kirmānī. Dated 1076-7/1665-6. Christie's, 27 April 1993, lot 34.
- U.2.6 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥāshīm (al-Tayir). Dated 1100/1688. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.
- U.5.6 - Scribe: Muḥammad Riza al-Shīrāzī. Dated 1096-7/1684-5. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 72.
- U.5.7 - Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Aqa Muḥammad ibn Ziyad al-Dīn al-Marāghī. Dated 1083-4/1672-3. Christie's, 23 April 1991, lot 65.

#### Mughal

- U.2.5 - Scribe: Maqṣūd <sup>c</sup>Alī. Dated 1092/1681. Sotheby's, 15-16 April, lot 224.
- U.2.7.2 - Scribe: Muḥammad Ḥusain Shīrāzī. North India. Dated 1037/1627. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

#### Ottoman

- U.2.3.1 - Scribe: Ibn Qasīm <sup>c</sup>Alī Muhsin al-Nīshāpūrī. Dated 1099/1687. Sotheby's, 15 April 1985, lot 225.
- U.2.4 - Scribe: Ḥāfiẓ <sup>c</sup>Uthmān. Dated 1082/1671. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.
- U.2.7 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrādī. Dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.
- U.2.7.1 - Scribe: Muṣṭafa al-Ḥilmī. Dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.

#### 4 a, b, c. Placement of *āyah*-markers in the Qur'ān.

- a. 1. Safavid Qur'ān. Dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's 12 October 1990, lot 222.
- b. Ottoman Qur'ān. Scribe: Muḥammad <sup>c</sup>Arīf al-Rajā'ī, pupil of Aḥmad al-Hamdī. Dated 1174/1760. Christie's 24 April 1980, lot 96.
- c. Mughal Qur'ān. Datable ca. 1590. Sotheby's 22-23 October 1992, lot 581.
5. Repetitive *āyah*-marker design.
6. Repetitive *āyah*-marker design.

#### 7a. *Āyah*-marker designs of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals.

- a. 1. Qur'ān attributed to Shaykh Ḥamdullāh. Ottoman, ca. 1500 A.D. Sotheby's 12 October 1990, lot. 212. (Ottoman, hereafter 'O').
- a. 1. Refer Chapter 4, fig. 7c(i).28. (Safavid, hereafter as 'S').
- a. 1. Qur'ān Mughal, ca. 1590 A.D. Sotheby's 22-23 October 1992, lot. 581. (Mughal, hereafter 'M').
- a. 2. (O). Qur'ān attributed to Shaykh Ḥamdullāh. Ottoman, ca. 1500 A.D. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot. 212.
- a. 2. (S). Refer Chapter 4, fig. 6a.3.
- a. 3. (O). Scribe: Copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh al-Qirīmī. Ottoman. Dated 973/1565-6. Christie's, 23-24 April 1991, lot 63.

- a.3. (S). Refer Chapter 4, fig. 6b(ii).9.
- a.4. (O). Ottoman, ca. 1600-1650 A.D. Christie's 11th October, 1988, lot. 57.
- a.4. (S). Refer Chapter 4, fig. 7c(i).26.
- a.4. (M). Scribe: Mullah Muḥammad Qayîm. India. 17th century A.D. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot. 219.

**7b. *Āyah*-marker designs of the Ottoman, Safavids and Mughals.**

- b.5. (O). Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafa. Ottoman. Dated 1088/1677. Sotheby's, 11 April 1988, lot 120.
- b.5. (S). Refer Chapter 4, fig. 7a.8.
- b.5. (M). Scribe: Maqṣûd <sup>c</sup>Alî. Mughal. Dated 1092/1681. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.
- b.6. (O). Scribe: Darvish Maḥmud Ibn Bairam. Ottoman. Dated 1090/1680-81. Christie's, 25 November 1985, lot 132.
- b.6. (S). Refer Chapter 4, fig. 6c.17.
- b.6. (M). Mughal. 18th century A.D. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 40.
- b.7. (O). Scribe: Muḥammad <sup>c</sup>Arîf al-Rajâ'î, Ottoman. Dated 1174/1760. Christie's, 24 April 1980, lot 96.
- b.7. (M). Mughal. 18th century A.D. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 38.
- b.8. (O). Scribe: Muḥammad <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Rajâ'î, Ottoman. Dated 1174/1760. Christie's, 24 April 1980, lot 96.
- b.8. (M). Scribe: Ḥabibullâh. India. 18th century A.D. Sotheby's 25 June 1985, lot 39.

**8a. Marginal designs**

**Safavid**

- 1. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).
- 2. Qur'ân. Datable ca. 1550 A.D. CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).
- 3. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).
- 4. Qur'ân. Datable early 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).
- 5. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

**Mughal**

- 1. Qur'ân. Datable ca. 1500 A.D. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 212.
- 2. Qur'ân. Datable ca. 1600 A.D. Sotheby's 13 October 1989, lot 96.

**Ottoman**

- 1, 2 & 3. Scribe: Sheikh Ḥamdullâh. Dated 901-2/1495-6. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, E.H. 72.

**8b.**

**Safavid**

- 6. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no. 161).
- 7. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1524 (Arberry no. 169).
- 8. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
- 9. Qur'ân. Datable early 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).
- 10. Qur'ân. Dated 975-6/1567-8. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

**Mughal**

- 3. Qur'ân. Datable third quarter 16th century. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 256.

**Ottoman**



4. Scribe: Sheikh Ḥamdullāh. Dated 901-2/1495-6. Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Müzesi, E.H. 72.
5. Qur'ân. Dated 986/1578. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 31.
6. Qur'ân. Datable third quarter of 16th century. Sotheby's, 17 October 1983, lot 284.

#### 8c.

##### Safavid

11. Qur'ân. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
- 12 & 13. Qur'ân. Datable early 17th century. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).
14. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
15. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).
16. Qur'ân. Datable 16th century. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).

##### Mughal

4. Scribe: Maqṣūd <sup>c</sup>Alī. Dated 1100/1688-9. Christie's, 22-23 November 1984, lot 120.

##### Ottoman

7. Scribe: Dilaver ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullāh Edirnavi. Dated 1021/1612. Sotheby's, 11 April 1988, lot 17.
8. Scribe: Ḥusain ibn Ramadân, a student of Davish <sup>c</sup>Alī al-Imâm. Dated 1125/1713-4. Christie's, 11 April 1989.

#### 9. Plant motifs and the cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillāh*.

##### Safavid

1. Qur'ân. Probably Herât, ca. 1490-1510 A.D. Khalili, QUR323.
2. Qur'ân. Herât or Tabrîz, ca. 1500-1550 A.D. Khalili QUR56.
3. Scribe: (Jamâl al-Dîn) Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî. Shirâz. Dated 972/1564-5. Khalili QUR422.
4. Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Qazwîn. 16th century. Khalili, QUR231.
5. Scribe: Aḥmad al-Nirizî. Illuminated by <sup>c</sup>Abd Allāh ibn Muṭṭalīb Mustaufi al-Shîrâzî. Dated 1125/1713. CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no. 177).
6. Scribe: Mîrza Aḥmad al-Tabrîzî. Dated 1136/1723-4. Christie's, 4 July 1985, Lot 105.

##### Mughal

1. British Library, ADD. 18497. Probably India. 16th century A.D.
- 2 & 3. Scribe: Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusaini. Dated 966/1588. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

##### Ottoman

1. Khalili, QUR82. Dated 938/1531-2.
2. Scribe: Muḥammad ibn Ramadân al-Maghluwî. Dated 973/1565. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.
3. Scribe: Ḥassan. Dated 996/1587. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.
4. Scribe: Ḥâfîz ibn <sup>c</sup>Alī. Dated 1099/1687. Christie's, 1 April 1982, lot 161.
5. Scribe: Muṣṭafa al-Ḥilmî. Dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.
6. Scribe: Sayyid Muḥammad al-Shakir during the reign of Selim Khân. Illuminated by Al-Hajj Ḥâfîz Muḥammad Nûrî'. Dated 1208/1793-4. Christie's, 28 November 1983, lot 105.

## List of abbreviations

- AT James, David. After Timur: Qur'âns of the 15th and 16th centuries. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Vol. 3. General ed. J. Raby. New York: The Nour Foundation, 1992.
- CEI Glassé, Cyril. The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam. London: Stacey International, 1991.
- CP Ahmad b. Mîr Munshî, Qâdî. Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qâdî Ahmad, Son of Mîr-Munshî (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606). Tr. by V. Minorsky. Smithsonian Institution. Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, Vol. 3. no. 2. Washington: The Lord Baltimore Press, Inc., 1959.
- HQ Yusuf Alî, °Abdullâh. The Holy Qur'ân. Text: Translation and Commentary. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975.
- IC Safadi, Y. H.. Islamic Calligraphy. Boulder: Shambala, 1978.
- MS James, David. The Master Scribes: Qur'âns of the 11th to 14th Centuries. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Vol. 2. General ed. J. Raby. New York: The Nour Foundation, 1992.
- QACI Lings, Martin. The Qur'ânic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination. Kent: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1976.
- QB James, David. Qur'âns and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition. London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1980.
- QM James, David. Qur'âns of the Mamlûks. London: Alexander Press, 1988.
- TQ Mawdûdî, Abul A'lâ Sayyid. Towards Understanding the Qur'ân. Vol. 1, *Sûrah* 1-3. English version of *Tafhîm al-Qur'ân*. Tr. & ed. Zafar Ishaq Ansari. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1988.

List of transliterations

Consonants

ء	‘	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	t
ت	t	ظ	z
ث	th	ع	‘
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ي	y

Vowels

Long

ا	â
آ	Â
و	û
ي	î

Doubled

يَّ	iiy (final form î)
وَّ	uww (final form û)

Diphthongs

وَ	au or aw
يَ	ai or ay

Short

اَ	a
وُ	u
يَ	i

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1. The Qur'ân Illuminated**

#### **2 The formal structure of an illuminated Qur'ân**

##### **2.1 The 'predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân**

##### **2.2 The 'non-predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân**

#### **3. Brief historical and theoretical background**

##### **3.1 The setting**

##### **3.2 The literary evidence**

#### **4. The Qur'ân and the Man**

## 1. The Qur'ân Illuminated

"*Siddiq Abu Bakr* [sic] read the sent-down book;  
*Omar* [sic] stitched its binding and cover;  
*Othman* [sic] wrote it in the right sequence and kept it;  
*Ali* [sic] gilded and decorated its pages."

[*Vehbi Efendi* (1261/1845)].<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Book of Islam is called *al-Qur'ân al-Karîm* (the noble Qur'ân). It was revealed to the Prophet *Muhammad s.a.w.* in the month of *Ramadân* at *Ghâr Hirâ* (the cave of *Hirâ*), near the summit of the mountain *Jabal Nûr*.<sup>2</sup> As stated in the Qur'ân:

"Proclaim! (or Read) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created-  
Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed; Proclaim! And thy Lord is  
Most Bountiful, - He who taught (The use of) the pen, - Taught man that  
which he knew not."

[*Sûrah* 96:1-5 (*al-<sup>c</sup>Alaq*)].<sup>3</sup>

There are 114 *suwar* (sing. *sûrah*) or chapters in the Qur'ân, with 6,616 *âyât* (sing. *âyah*) or verses, 77,934 words, and 323,671 letters.<sup>4</sup> At first, the revelation was impressed upon Muhammad's memory. He then conveyed it verbatim to his relatives or companions. At a later age, certainly after the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D.,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (London, 1990), 82.

<sup>2</sup> C. Glassé, 'Koran', *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam* (London, 1991), 228.

<sup>3</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ân: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leicester, 1975), pp.1761-62.

<sup>4</sup> I. R. al-Fârûqî, & L. L. al-Fârûqî, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York, 1986), 100.

although the actual date is not known, it was given book form. It was in this form that the embellishment of the Qur'ân began to take place, starting with the refinement of the calligraphy into different styles of writing, and at a much later age the introduction of illumination. By the 13th century, all aspects of illumination had been fully developed.<sup>5</sup>

To Muslims, the Qur'ân is the word of God (*Allâh*); it therefore requires as much exclusiveness of intention and purity of purpose as does worshipping and serving Him. For the Muslim artist, the whole purpose of the art of the holy book is to affirm the transcendence of the Qur'ân.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps one way of expressing this is by writing it beautifully and by illuminating the holy book to the utmost level of perfection that he could express. His expression must also reflect his adherence to the *shari'ah*.

According to David Diringer in 1955,<sup>7</sup> and later Christopher de Hamlet in 1992, "strictly speaking, an illuminated manuscript contains gold or silver which reflects the light. A manuscript with much decoration but in colours without actually having gold or silver is, technically, not illuminated".<sup>8</sup> and will normally be classified as 'illustration'. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that a decorated page in a

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<sup>5</sup> M. Lings and Y. H. Safadi, *The Qur'ân: Catalogue of an Exhibition of Qur'ân Manuscripts at the British Library. 3 April-15th August 1976* (London, 1976), pp. 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> See L. Binyon, J. V. S. Wilkinson & B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting* (London, 1933), 183; R. Ettinghausen "Manuscript Illumination", *A Survey of Persian Art: From Prehistoric Times to the Present*, eds. A. U. Pope & P. Ackerman, Vol. 5 (Ashiya, 1981), 1937 and Lings and Safadi, *Qur'ân*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> D. Diringer, *The Illuminated Books* (London, 1955), pp.21-22.

<sup>8</sup> C. de Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (London, 1992), 57.

manuscript (for example the frontispiece) can also be classified as a piece of 'illuminated manuscript' even when it does not use silver or gold.<sup>9</sup> When gold is scarce and expensive, yellow is used as a replacement for gold.<sup>10</sup> Though yellow cannot equal the qualities of gold, the effect generated by a piece of illuminated page is still felt. Though one must accept a distinction between 'illumination' and 'illustration', the two often go together. Whatever the argument may be, "perfect illumination" - writes John W. Bradley - "must contain both colours and metal".<sup>11</sup>

In Turkish, *tezhib* is the word used for illumination. It is derived from the word *zeheb* (Arabic *dhahab*), meaning "gold". Works decorated in gold such as decorated calligraphic panels and monograms for the Sultans were referred as *muzehhep*, while the artist working with powdered gold is known as *muzehhip*.<sup>12</sup> In Arabic, the illuminator is usually called *mudhâhib* (the gilder).<sup>13</sup>

A calligrapher is usually known in Arabic as *khattât*<sup>14</sup> and when a person functioned on the level of both *khattât* and *mudhâhib*, he will be known more as a

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<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of illumination, see H. Osborne, *The Oxford Companion to Art*, 557 and H. C. Wyld, *The Universal Dictionary of The English Language* (1936), 581.

<sup>10</sup> F. Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition: Qur'âns of the 8th to the 10th centuries A.D., The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, Vol. 1*. General ed. J. Raby (New York, 1992), 22.

<sup>11</sup> Düringer, *Illuminated*, 23.

<sup>12</sup> A. Ersoy, *Türk tezhip sanatı* (Istanbul, 1988), 78.

<sup>13</sup> Ettinghausen, "Manuscript Illumination", 1939.

<sup>14</sup> According to Annemarie Schimmel, "in order to be called a *khattât* [sic], long study with a master was required until one graduated by receiving the *ijâza* [sic] (permission)" in *Calligraphy*, 36.



*kâtib* (scribe).<sup>15</sup> A *kâtib* will also be known as *warrâq*, if his role includes paper making, copying, selling of books and even having his own library as well.<sup>16</sup> The art of book production in the medieval Islamic world was normally under royal patronage, and by the end of the Safavid period and later,<sup>17</sup> under wealthy individual,<sup>18</sup> merchants<sup>19</sup> or *warrâq*. This industry included a team of specialists<sup>20</sup> working together to produce both religious and secular books commissioned from them. The production of illuminated Qur'âns was an act of piety towards the religion of Islam<sup>21</sup> [*sûrah* 96:1-5 (*al-<sup>c</sup>Alaq*)], as well as the highest form of art in the Islamic world.

## 2. The formal structure of an illuminated Qur'ân

In the making of an illuminated Qur'ân, it is fundamental that a clear understanding of two main areas should be possessed by the scribe, the artist and, even the bookbinder. These two areas may be termed the 'predetermined areas' and

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<sup>15</sup> Ettinghausen, "*Manuscript Illumination*," 1939.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> M. S. Dimand, *A Handbook of Mohammedan Decorative Arts* (New York, 1930), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (London, 1993), 113.

<sup>19</sup> According to Ernst Kühnel, by the end of the 17th century, the art of the book reached its stagnation and decadence under Shâh <sup>c</sup>Abbâs II. Increasingly, bazaar production began to replace the Royal patronage; in E. Kühnel, *Islamic Arts*, tr. K. Watson (London, 1970), 60.

<sup>20</sup> Sir Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford, 1928), 150-151.

<sup>21</sup> H. H. Vreeland, *Artistic and Intellectual Achievement* (New Haven, 1957), 279.



the 'non-predetermined areas'. Each area has its own order, meaning and rules. Each aims to facilitate reading and understanding, and to give meaning mentally as well as spiritually.<sup>22</sup> Predetermined areas are autonomous while non-predetermined areas in many ways rely on the former for their existence.

## 2.1 The 'predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân

The 'predetermined areas' deal directly with the arrangement and form of the text as well as its meanings, without which it is not a Qur'ân at all. The scribe or the artist must formulate and strictly observe the rules in these 'predetermined areas'. For example, some knowledge of the *ʿIlm Tajwîd*<sup>23</sup> is essential for the scribe when copying the Qur'ân. This includes spelling, punctuation, and marginal instructions at the different passages. Even a slight alteration in structure and form may mean a change in content and meaning, and thus destroy the authenticity of the text.<sup>24</sup> It is a single fabric to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be subtracted.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lings and Safadi, *Qur'ân*, 13

<sup>23</sup> A comprehensive account of the rules and regulations of recitation, can be found in a book co-authored by Dr. A. Abdul-Fattah, A. Hassanin & S. Saleh, *Tajwîd-ul-Qur'ân: A new approach to mastering the art of reciting the Holy Qur'ân* (London, 1989).

<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Abû Layla gave a good account of this issue in his article, "The Qur'ân: Nature, Authenticity, Authority and Influence on the Muslim Mind", in *The Islamic Quarterly*, 5. 36 (London, 1992), pp. 227-41.

<sup>25</sup> C. L. G. Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (Cambridge, 1994), 90.

Tradition states that, at the time of the Caliph ʿUthmān, rules as to the copying of the Qurʾān (known as *Rasm al-khatt*), were laid down based on the *Ijmāʿ* (unanimous consent) of the Companions.<sup>26</sup> Knowledge of *Rasm al-khatt*, *ʿIlm al-Tajwīd* and the structure of the text are all of the utmost importance to scribes, illuminators and binders (*mujallidūn*). Some examples of the 'predetermined areas' can be seen in the *āyah*; *sūrah*; *rukūʿ*; *juzʿ*; *sajdah* and *manāzil*. All these can be categorised as "external forms"<sup>27</sup> of the Qurʾān and already predetermined.

To begin with, the term *āyah* (pl. *āyāt*) means a symbol, sign or mark of distinction<sup>28</sup>. It is the term used for a verse of the Qurʾān to facilitate reading as well as understanding. Every *āyah* can be seen as a symbol or a sign of the subject matter it deals with.

Next is the *sūrah*, a word which means literally 'row'<sup>29</sup> or 'fence'. A *sūrah* is the common term used for a 'chapter'<sup>30</sup> in the Qurʾān. There are 114 *sūwar* of unequal length, of which the shortest consists of 4 *āyāt* and the longest 286 *āyāt*<sup>31</sup>. Of the 114 *sūwar*, 86 were revealed in Mecca and 28 in Madina. In the Qurʾān, they are known

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<sup>26</sup> Sell, *Faith*, 348.

<sup>27</sup> The *āyah*, *sūrah*, *rukūʿ* *juzʿ* and *manāzil* are regarded as external form of the Qurʾān, in W. M. Watt & R. Bell, *Introduction to the Qurʾān* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp.57-61.

<sup>28</sup> S. A. Ali, *Qurʾān: The Fundamental Law of Human Life* (Karachi, 1982), 74.

<sup>29</sup> Glassé, *CEI*, 382.

<sup>30</sup> According to Watt and Bell, the term 'chapter' is not an exact translation for *sūrah*, in *Introduction to the Qurʾān*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Denffer, *ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qurʾān* (Leicester, 1989), 67.

as *Makkî* and *Madanî*<sup>32</sup>. Usually, the beginning of each *sûrah* is marked by a heading. In this heading is written the name or title of the *sûrah*, then a statement about its date, and finally a note of the number of verses. The dating does not go beyond the bare description of the *sûrah* as Meccan, or Medinan; and these descriptions do not necessarily apply to the *sûrah* as a whole. For example *Sûrah al-Fâtihah*, *Makkî* and seven *âyât*.

The *suwar* can also be grouped into four kinds:

- a. *al-Ṭiwāl* (long *âyât*): 2-10.
- b. *al-Mâ'ûn*: *suwar* with approximately 100 *âyât*: 10-35.
- c. *al-Mathânî*: *suwar* with less than 100 *âyât*: 36-49.
- d. *al-Mufaṣṣal*: the last section of the Qur'ân beginning with *Sûrah Qâf*: 50-114.<sup>33</sup>

In order to further facilitate the reading of the Qur'ân in a week, a division of the *suwar* into seven approximately equal lengths was made. These are known as *manâzil*<sup>34</sup> This seven *manâzil* are as follows:

- a. First : *Sûrah al-Fâtihah* (1) to *al-Nisâ'* (4).....Juz' 1 to 6.
- b. Second : *Sûrah al-Mâ'idah* (5) to *al-Taubah* (9).....Juz' 6 to 11.
- c. Third : *Sûrah Yûnus* (10) to *al-Nahl* (16).....Juz' 11 to 14.
- d. Fourth : *Sûrah al-Isrâ'* (17) to *al-Furqân* (25).....Juz' 15 to 19.
- e. Fifth : *Sûrah al-Shu'arâ'* (26) to *Yâ-sîn* (36).....Juz' 19 to 22.
- f. Sixth : *Sûrah al-Şâffât* (37) to *al-Hujurât* (49).....Juz' 22 to 26.
- g. Seventh : *Sûrah Qâf* (50) to *al-Nâs* (114).....Juz' 26 to 30.

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<sup>32</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 76.

<sup>33</sup> *Op cit.*, 68.

<sup>34</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 81.

Furthermore, the Qur'ân can also be divided into 30 approximately equal lengths. Each length is known as a *juz'* (pl. *ajzâ'*), which means "part" or "portion"<sup>35</sup>. This division is clearly shown by the margin of the text, either on the right hand side if it is *recto*, or on the left hand side if it is *verso*. This is to facilitate reading of the Qur'ân in a month of 30 days<sup>36</sup>, or in the 30 nights of *Ramaḍân*<sup>37</sup>. The 30 *juz'* of the Qur'ân begin with:

- 1) *Alif Lâm Mîm*, 2) *Sayaqûlu*, 3) *Tilka al-Rusul*, 4) *Lan Tanâlû*, 5) *Wa al-Muḥṣanât*, 6) *La Yuḥibbu*, 7) *Wa- Idhâ- Samî<sup>c</sup>û*, 8) *Wa Lau Annanâ*, 9) *Qâl- al-Mala'u*, 10) *Wa A<sup>c</sup>lamû*, 11) *Ya<sup>c</sup>tadhirûn*, 12) *Wa Mâ Min Dâbbah*, 13) *Wa Mâ 'Ubarri'u*, 14) *Rubbamâ*, 15) *Subhâna allâdhî*, 16) *Qâla Alam*, 17) *Iqtaraba Li-nnâs*, 18) *Qad 'Aflaḥa*, 19) *Wa Qâla alladhinâ*, 20) *'Amman Khalaqa*, 21) *'Uthl Mâ 'Ûḥiya*, 22) *Wa Man Yaqnut*, 23) *Wa Mâliya Lâ*, 24) *Fa Man 'Az lamu*, 25) *'Ilaihi Yuraddu*, 26) *Ha Mîm*, 27) *Qâla Famâ Khaṭbukum*, 28) *Qad Samî<sup>c</sup> Allâh*, 29) *Tabârakâ 'Alladhî*, and 30) *<sup>c</sup>Amma Yatasâ 'lûn*<sup>38</sup>.

*Sûrah al-Fâtihah* does not form part of any *juz'*. Sometimes a *juz'* is further subdivided into 4 *'ahzâb* indicated by the sign in Arabic *ḥizb* (pl. *'ahzâb*). For example 2: 74 is the beginning of the second *ḥizb* of the Qur'ân, indicated by the figure 2: . Each *ḥizb*<sup>39</sup> is again subdivided into quarters:

- a. First quarter of the *ḥizb*: *al-rub<sup>c</sup>*.

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<sup>35</sup> Denffer, *<sup>c</sup>Ulûm*, 68.

<sup>36</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, XX.

<sup>37</sup> *Op cit.*, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 82.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

b. Half of the *hizb*: *al-nisf*.

c. Third quarter of the *hizb*: *al-thulth*.

Another predetermined aspect in the Qur'ân is the *rukû'* meaning "a bow". Usually there are 15 to 20 *rukû'* in a *juz'*. A *rukû'* is also a name of a section of a *sûrah* often marked in the texts by *hamzah* or an *ʿayn* in the margin<sup>40</sup>. This section can also be considered as a paragraph<sup>41</sup> within a chapter. The longer chapters are divided into *rukû'* and each *rukû'* generally deals with one subject.<sup>42</sup> Generally in one *rukû'* there are 10 *âyât*<sup>43</sup>. Sometimes Arabic numerals were written together with the symbols.

Next, the *âyât sajdah*. Altogether there are 14 *âyât sajdah*<sup>44</sup> in the Qur'ân. During recitation, when the relevant symbol or the word *sajdah* appears in the margin, a prostration is required of the reader.

Finally, the *rumûz al-auqâf*. A knowledge of the punctuation marks or the *rumûz al-auqâf* is necessary for an intelligent reading of the text. The symbols or signs used are in Arabic letters, for example, *Lâm 'Alif* ( ل ), *mîm* ( م ), *jîm* ( ج ), *tâ'* ( ط ), *zây* ( ز ) and *ṣâd* ( ص ). They are vividly coloured in gold, silver, blue and red in the text.

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<sup>40</sup> Glassé, *CEI*, 338.

<sup>41</sup> Denffer, *ʿUlûm*, 68.

<sup>42</sup> M. M. Ali, *The Holy Qur'ân* (Lahore, 1951), xi.

<sup>43</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 81.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.



These symbols have specific functions. Thus, the letter *Lâm 'Alif (La Taqif)* is a warning not to stop and the letter *mîm (Waqf Lâzim)* shows that a stop is absolutely necessary, otherwise the sense is spoiled. This is so important that it is also shown prominently in the margin *Waqf Lâzim*. The letter *Jîm (Waqf Jâ'iz)*, which means stoppage is permissible, but the sense is not spoiled if one decides to continue reading. A full stop is indicated by the letter *tâ' (Waqf Mutlaq)*. This is only the end of a sentence, but not the end of an argument. The symbol *zây (Waqf Mujawwa')* means that a stop is permissible but it is better not to stop, and finally, the symbol *ṣâd (Waqf Murakhkhas)* means it is permissible to stop for breath since the *âyat* is very long.<sup>45</sup>

Besides these, there are also seven other symbols that one can find in the text for purposes of *rumûz al-Auqâf*, such as: *Ma'â (مع)* a symbol used when one *âyat* has two different interpretations of stoppage during recitation. In one interpretation stoppage should be in one place and in the other it should be at a different place. One may stop at either places. *Saktah (سكتة)* is where readers should pause without breaking their breath; *Waqfah (وقفه)* similar to *saktah*, but the duration of the pause is much longer; *Qâf (ق)* a permissible stoppage; *Qif (قف)* means "stop"; *Ṣali (صلی)* meaning, "it is better to read together";<sup>46</sup> *Ṣal (صل)* there are two views to this symbol, some stop while some continue reading; and *Waqf al-Nabî (وقف النبي)* is to note where the Prophet used to stop during recitation of the Qur'ân.<sup>47</sup> Very rarely do these coloured letters and words, in red, blue and gold, upset the overall aesthetic impact of the page layout.

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 101.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

## 2.2 The 'non-predetermined areas' in the Qur'ân

One of the most important aspects in a composition is the planning of the surface. In every visual conception, the expression of the subject depends on the certainty of the principal points in a composition.<sup>48</sup> In 'non-predetermined areas' this involves questions of aesthetics, such as the style of writing, decoration; illumination; binding, and perhaps also patronage (of a particular time and place) as well as ergonomic<sup>49</sup> problems in the world of design. These areas too have their own hidden artistic rules but these are not as strictly applied as those in the former areas. These hidden rules and regulations are culturally biased, but fall within the accepted norms in the Qur'ânic decoration.

The compilation of the Qur'ân,<sup>50</sup> its decoration or illumination started as early as the first century *Hijrah*.<sup>51</sup> In a popular Persian tradition, recorded by Dûst Muhammad, it was ʿAlî ibn Abî-Tâlib, the prophet's son-in-law, who was the first to introduce illumination in the Qur'ân.<sup>52</sup> Ever since then, the decoration of the Qur'ân

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<sup>48</sup> C. J. Holmes, *Notes on the Science of Picture-Making* (London, 1909), 60.

<sup>49</sup> K. F. Murell defined 'ergonomic' as the scientific study of the relationship between man and his working environment. It involves other disciplines like anatomy and physiology, anthropometry, physiological psychology, experimental psychology, physics and engineering etc., in *Ergonomics: Man in His Working Environment* (London, 1965), xiii.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Nadîm, Abul-Faraj Muhammad b. Yazîd. *The Fihrist of al-Nadîm*, ed. and tr. Bayard Dodge, V. 1 (New York, 1970), pp. 62-63.

<sup>51</sup> Ettinghausen, "*Manuscript Illumination*", 1939.

<sup>52</sup> Ahmad b. Mîr Munshî, Qâdî. *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qâdî Ahmad, Son of Mîr-Munshî (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606)*, tr. V. Minorsky. Smithsonian Institution. Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, Vol. 3. no. 2 (Washington, 1959), 1974. See L. Binyon, J. W. S. Wilkinson and B. Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, (London, 1933), 183 and Ettinghausen, "*Manuscript*

has been a cultural phenomenon<sup>53</sup> and attained the highest quality during the Safavid period.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the development of this decoration and illumination is within the 'predetermined areas' of the Qur'ân under the close scrutiny of the *ʿulamâ*' (religious class)<sup>55</sup>, the *bâshi* (chief of a particular guild of that city) or *mullâs* (minor clergy);<sup>56</sup> or even master craftsmen. Any artistic changes in the design that do not affect the structure, content and meaning of the text, are widely accepted by Muslims. It is also a normal practice amongst scribes or illuminators, to include a phrase at the end of the Qur'ân welcoming corrections to be made for any unintentional mistakes that are found. It is obligatory for all Muslims to preserve the authenticity of the Holy Book and any mistakes must be corrected. The word *waqf*<sup>57</sup> (endowment) written in some folios in the Qur'ân is perhaps an indicator of such a religious obligation.<sup>58</sup>

Basically, there are two important criteria which apply to 'non-predetermined areas' of a typical illuminated Qur'ân. First, the format or page layout, which must be decided prior to any writing or decoration in the Qur'ân. This aspect has little to do with the content of the text but more with its aesthetic presentation. Perhaps it

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*Illumination*", 1937.

<sup>53</sup> Ettinghausen, "*Manuscript Illumination*", 1937.

<sup>54</sup> Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* (New Haven, 1994), 165.

<sup>55</sup> A. K. S. Lambton, *Islamic Society in Persia* (London, 1954), 27.

<sup>56</sup> Vreeland, "*Artistic*", 283.

<sup>57</sup> Examples can be found in Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, CBL Ms. 1496, fols.4V-5R (Arberry No. 100). See D. James, *Qur'âns and Bindings: From The Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition* (London, 1980), 53.

<sup>58</sup> From the writer's own observation, phrases welcoming corrections and the word *waqf* are common in most hand-written Qur'âns but not in modern printed Qur'âns.

functions on a different spiritual level through visual means. Over the centuries, Qur'âns took many forms and shapes. Some are in scrolls while others are in a book form, and they vary in size. All these are effects of changes in the format and page layout of the Qur'ân.

Secondly, the incorporation of decoration in the text. It is said that decoration or illumination arose as supplement to the text.<sup>59</sup> Usually such decoration is well thought of, taking into account with the arrangement of the text and reading signs, as stated above in the discussion of 'predetermined areas'. The motifs used may differ but the placement is predetermined. Decorative elements such as plant motifs, colours, shapes and the amount of gold or silver used may be socio-economically as well as culturally or historically based.<sup>60</sup>

To sum up, it is pertinent to note the existence of these two formal aspect of an illuminated Qur'ân. The predetermined areas are strictly governed by the *ʿulamâ'* (religious group) or the *ḥuffâz* (sing. *ḥâfîz*) (those who knows the Qur'ân by heart) who maintain the authenticity of the Qur'ân. In the non-predetermined areas, which apparently fall in the realm of artistic manifestation, there is less control but even here artists still follow the rules and regulation already set out for them.

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<sup>59</sup> Ettinghausen, "*Manuscript Illumination*", 1937.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

### 3 Brief historical and theoretical background

#### 3.1 The setting

In the Safavid period, it can be said that art is a guided activity. The arts of the book, along with other crafts, were considered as a commodity<sup>61</sup> and had their own guild.<sup>62</sup> The artists were often organised into workshops or studios,<sup>63</sup> be it in the bazaars or in the royal studios and libraries of the Shâhs.<sup>64</sup> An officer or elder known as the white beard (*rîsh-safîd*), headman (*kadkhudâ*), or chief (*bâshi*)<sup>65</sup> was in charge of this organisation or workshop. Usually the *bâshi* was chosen from amongst its members on the basis of his piety<sup>66</sup> and superior accomplishment in its craft. The selected person would then be officially appointed by a royal diploma (*farmân*) on the recommendation of the *nâzir-i-buyûtât* (superintendent of the royal establishment).<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Vreeland, "Artistic", 278.

<sup>62</sup> G. Sjöberg listed eight generalizable patterns or functions with respect to guild irrespective of time and place (inclusive of the Islamic World). The eight functions are: 1) To have monopoly of a particular craft and trade. 2) To select membership under special regulation. 3) To provide training to particular occupation in the guild. 4) To ensure and maintain standard in the workshop. 5) To protect members politically. 6) To assist members economically. 7) To avoid mutual strife through conciliation. 8) To perform significant ceremonial and religious functions. See G. Sjöberg, 'Economic Structure', in *The Preindustrial City: Past and Present* (New York, 1960), pp. 192-195.

<sup>63</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>64</sup> A document (Topkapi Sarayi Library, H.2153, f. 98a) concerning an artistic progress report from the Timurid Kitabkhana to Baysunghur ibn Shah Rukh, is translated by W. Thackston, in T. W. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, "Arzadasht" in *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Washington, 1989), 364.

<sup>65</sup> Lambton, *Islamic*, 22.

<sup>66</sup> B. Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds", *The Economic History Review* 8 (1937-1938), 31.

<sup>67</sup> M. Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period: Contribution to*



The *bâshi* was the link person between the guild and the government. As for the royal studios, the master craftsmen or the master scribe was normally appointed by the Shâh himself. There was a close relationship between craft guilds, religion and politics.<sup>68</sup> This situation can be found during Mongol and Timurid times as well as the Safavid period. At the time of Shâh ʿAbbâs I, when the state was centralised, the tendency was that everything became more closely linked with the government.<sup>69</sup> The business of art too became more or less a state affair. Normally the art of the book or manuscript, were closely linked with the library or the university<sup>70</sup> and also to a mosque<sup>71</sup> built by the Shâh. A surviving *farmâns* by Shâh Tahmâsp I, showed his keen interest in the welfare and economic growth of the guilds.<sup>72</sup> The responsibilities of a master scribe are best illustrated in one of Shâh Tahmâsp's I *farmâns* (command):

"A surviving *farmân* of Shâh Tahmâsp I dated 983/1575 assigns to Mûllâ Hasan Muzahhib [*sic*] (manuscript illuminator) a number of responsibilities which are specified in detail : he was to supervise the guilds of the manuscript illuminators, scribes, binders, illuminators, and paper sellers, licence persons who were qualified to practise the said crafts, constantly inspect the raw materials which the said artisans used in their work, and take action against any artisan guilty of professional misconduct."<sup>73</sup>

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*the Social-Economic History of Persia*, diss., University of Durham, 1980 (Berlin, 1982), 80.

<sup>68</sup> Lambton, *Islamic*, 27.

<sup>69</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>70</sup> Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds", 20.

<sup>71</sup> Kotov, Yefremov, Danibegnov, *A Journey to the Kingdom of Persia [circa 1624] in Russian Travellers to India and Persia [1624-1798]*, tr. & ed. by P. M. Kemp (New Delhi, 1959), 18.

<sup>72</sup> Keyvani, *Artisans*, 81.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Membership of the guild was by appointment and only those highly qualified or having the right skill would be taken in.<sup>74</sup> Artists or craftsmen working in the royal workshop had higher skills and qualifications than their self-employed colleagues, and thus enjoyed a better social as well as economic status.<sup>75</sup> Thus, this situation created competition amongst the craftsmen or the artists. Furthermore, only by belonging to a certain group did artists acquire security and status.<sup>76</sup> Directly or indirectly, artists worked under an organised system, of patronage, of values and norms under the culture and religion of Islam.

### 3.2 The literary evidence

Documents related to the art of the book in the Safavid period are scarce.<sup>77</sup> To David James, it means that there are few artists employed in book production and whose career can be traced with any certainty.<sup>78</sup> Iskandar Munshî, an annalist who lived in the early period of the Safavid Shâh (996-1039/1587-1629), gives us a glimpse of the situation of art in that period.<sup>79</sup> His account is full of praises of artists

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<sup>74</sup> Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds", pp. 21-37.

<sup>75</sup> Keyvani, *Artisans*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> Lambton, *Islamic*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> T. W. Arnold (Sir), *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* (New York, 1965), 144.

<sup>78</sup> D. James, *After Timur: Qur'âns of the 15th and 16th centuries. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, V. 3*. General ed. J. Raby (New York, 1992), 113.

<sup>79</sup> Sir T. W. Arnold had translated in full the text written by *Iskandar Munshî*, in his chapter of biography, in *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* (New York, 1965), pp.138-149.

and patrons, but none on the execution of a work of art. Nevertheless, some important points are made regarding the state of art at that time. For example, royal patrons like Shâh Ismâ'îl, Shâh Tahmâsp and Shâh 'Abbâs were themselves trained artists and patrons of arts. Some areas, such as gilding, had reached perfection in Mawlânâ Hassan Baghdâdî's<sup>80</sup> works; Mawlânâ 'Alî Asghâr<sup>81</sup> was said to be a fine colourist; and Mawlânâ Bârî<sup>82</sup> was celebrated for his minute and fine works. We also know that some forgeries took place, which usually, to a certain extent, are a reflection of the high standard and skills attained by artists. Presumably it also reflects a wide range of patronage and a flourishing art market. Sâdiqi Beg was said to have had given up painting because of the poor art market. Mawlânâ 'Abd al-Jabbâr from Gîlân, went to Qazwîn to established his own atelier.<sup>83</sup> Iskandar Munshî also states that artists were influenced by European art,<sup>84</sup> probably because of the international outlook of the Safavid court and the expansion of trade.<sup>85</sup>

This scarcity of documentation is also due to the internal conflicts which followed the fall of the Safavids. Important documents from the guild systems such as account books, transaction records of shopkeepers and artisans; records of taxpayers; price lists; endowment deeds; records of appointments of guild officials; and

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>84</sup> See Dimand, *Handbook*, 46 and Kühnel, *The Minor Arts of Islam*, tr. Katherine Watson (New York, 1971), 60.

<sup>85</sup> R. Hillenbrand, *Imperial Images in Persian Painting* (Edinburgh, 1977), 12.

judgements of guild courts were mostly destroyed.<sup>86</sup> According to Âsaf (the late 18th century historian), in the last days of Safavid rule all these documents of the Safavid and pre-Safavid Shâhs, which were then kept in the *Sarâ-yi Châr Hawz* (a palace belonging to the Shâh), were burnt on the order of <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh Khân (the governor of Isfâhân).<sup>87</sup> Similarly, at the time of the first Afghan ruler of Isfâhân, as stated by Jâbiri Anşâri (the 19th century historian), on the orders of Maḥmûd, all the account books and important papers on the tradesmen and artisans of the bazaar were cast into the *Zâyanda Rûd*.<sup>88</sup>

The surviving illuminated Qur'âns are therefore significant documents of their time. Some of these illuminated Qur'âns have colophons and signed illumination, although for the most part they are anonymous, undated, and unprovenanced, and none contains any contemporary information about its patrons.<sup>89</sup> Happily there survives Qâdî Aḥmad's treatise, published by Minorsky in 1959. At least one surviving literature concerning The procedure in determining page layout, is recorded by Qâdî Aḥmad's treatise, dated 1606 A.D., as follows:

*"First marginal line (jadval) [sic]. - Draw first a thin line and after that a thicker gold line so that between the two lines there should remain the space of a knife's back. Then use the polisher and draw a contour round the thin line, and four contours round the other line - two before and two behind. Then put lapis lazuli upon it (?).*

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<sup>86</sup> Keyvani, *Artisan*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> James, *AT*, 113.

*Second (muthannâ) [sic] marginal line.* - First draw two gold lines opposite one another, then use the polisher for the gold and draw two contours to each line. Then round (them?) draw lapis lazuli.

*Marginal line with three contours.* - First draw a gold line and use the polisher. Then draw two contours, one in front and one behind, and finally draw lapis lazuli."<sup>90</sup>

Though the above account seems trivial in our present art historical research, nevertheless it presents a clear picture of some of the recommended steps in page layout design at that time. This provides proof that a systematic approach in page layout, though in many ways a rather simplistic one, had been established by the later Safavid era or even earlier.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps tradition then was more of an oral tradition and perhaps, what was written was much less than what was taught by the master to the apprentice.<sup>92</sup>

To date, at least four authors have dealt in great depth with the problems of format or page layout in the art of the Islamic book. Guest's studies (1949)<sup>93</sup> highlighted two fundamental aspects: "the relative proportions in the page between text and picture, and the proportions within the composition including purely formal qualities such as the horizontal and vertical axes and the resulting divisions or structures in the composition."<sup>94</sup> In 1954, Stchoukine<sup>95</sup> uses a structural analysis to

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<sup>90</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 196.

<sup>91</sup> A. U. Pope, *An Introduction to Persian Art since the Seventh Century A.D.* (London, 1930), 106.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds", 30.

<sup>93</sup> G. D. Guest, *Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1949), 23-33.

<sup>94</sup> K. Ådahl, *A Khamsa of Nizami of 1439* (Stockholm, 1981), 44.

<sup>95</sup> See I. Stchoukine, *Les Peintures des Manuscrits Timurides* (Paris, 1954). See



describe three basic structures in the composition dominated by a strictly geometrical conception: the "epicentric", the "triangle-rectangle" and the "ellipsoidal or circular".

Papadopoulo's analysis in 1980<sup>96</sup>, discusses the hidden structure of miniature paintings by means of spiral form but finds problems in the page layout composition. Ådahl's approach supports Stchoukine's analysis. The layout is indirectly presented by three main scenes, that is "exterior scenes", "interior scenes" and a combination of both<sup>97</sup>. Later, in 1989, in a work based on these writings, Muḥammad Zain's introduced two aspects in the analysis of Timurid miniature paintings, The compositional relationship between text and picture, and its concept of space.<sup>98</sup> Though these studies concern art in secular manuscripts, nevertheless they provide some basic working formulae for the study of illuminated Qur'ân.

In the case of designing the format or layout of the Qur'ân, the subject matter is entirely different. Anything that deals with the Qur'ân is in fact of great interest and concern to Muslims. The inclusion of illuminated decorative elements took a very long time to develop. Perhaps, only by the end of the 10th century, as illustrated in the Ibn al-Bawwâb manuscript, did it gain acceptance.<sup>99</sup> Most art historical studies of the Qur'ân are more concerned with the art of calligraphy and less on other artistic aspects that are equally abundant in the Qur'ân.

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Ådahl, *Khamsa*, 45.

<sup>96</sup> See A. Papadopoulo, *Islam and Muslim Art* (London, 1980), 458-464.

<sup>97</sup> D. H. Muḥammad Zain, *Formal Values in Timurid Miniature Painting* (Kuala Lumpur, 1989), 8.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> D. James, *Qur'âns of The Mamlûks* (London, 1988), 24.

However, there are writers who in passing have dealt with the subject of hidden structure in the art of the Qur'ân. A book by Issam el-Said and Ayse Parman entitled "*Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*" (1976)<sup>100</sup> seems to have shown some potential in these studies. Their theoretical concept of geometric patterns applied in their figures 102a to 102c (a 14th century Qur'ân from Mosul) and 103a to 103c (a 14th century Qur'an from Egypt), vividly illustrate the hidden structure in the composition<sup>101</sup> but, no other folios in the Qur'âns test their theory further. On the other hand, Martin Lings' (1976) chapter on '*The Principles of Qur'ân Illumination*'<sup>102</sup> is more to do with iconographical interpretation and with the meaning of symbols associated with the Qur'ân. One of the many examples given by him relates symbols found in the verse itself with artistic illuminated symbols painted by the artist. For example the rayed sun is connected by him with the concept of light in the Qur'ân<sup>103</sup>. Perhaps, David James' book entitled '*Qur'âns of the Mamlûks*', published in 1988 and loosely based on his doctoral thesis, gives a closer analysis of the development of style in illumination, but it is rather lacking in its graphic illustration.

In brief, then, the arts in the Safavid period functioned within a workshop under guild system. It was a close-knit system related to commerce, patronage, culture and religion. Written documents are scarce owing to the downfall of the

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<sup>100</sup> See I. El-Said and A. Parman, *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art* (London, 1976).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.148-151.

<sup>102</sup> M. Lings, *The Qur'ânic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination* (London, 1976), pp.71-98.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

Safavids when they were destroyed by succeeding governors or rulers. However, Qâḍî Aḥmad's treatise throws some light on the formal aspect of the art of the book, but far from providing a detail working information. Present writings by people like Guest, Ådahl and James (to name only a few) have provide us with some working art-historical methods to do with the art of the book. Except for James, their work is, however, more in the area of secular Islamic manuscripts.

#### 4 The Qur'ân and the Man

To Muslims, the Qur'ân is the word of God. This is clearly stated in the Qur'ân in *Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah* as follows:

"That this is indeed a Qur'ân most honourable, in a Book well-guarded which none shall touch but those who are clean: A Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds."

[*Sûrah* 66:77-80 (*al-Wâqî'ah*)].<sup>104</sup>

Since it is the word of God and revealed from above, it is treated with the utmost care, love and respect. It is said that the most respected and honoured vocation in the eye of religion<sup>105</sup> is the scribe. It is he who carries heavy responsibility in rightly copying the Qur'ân for the *'ummah* (masses). Similar respect was also given to the illuminator who adorned the Qur'ân,<sup>106</sup> even though there are not many examples of Qur'âns signed with an illuminator's name as compared to that of the

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<sup>104</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, 1493.

<sup>105</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Ersoy, *Türk*, 78.

scribe. This is because the adorning of the Qur'ân constituted team-work. Nevertheless, occasionally we do get some Qur'âns signed by both the scribe and the illuminator. A documented example of an appreciation given to the illuminator can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 1101/1689 in Damascus:

"He who had the honour of illuminating this Koran [*sic*]/the artist in need of God's grace, Musa, a student of dervish Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Arif, (it was finished) during the night of 29th/*Ramadan* the holy month, in the year 1100 after Hegira of the Prophet (=16 July 1689), to him the highest blessing and perfect/salutation."<sup>107</sup>

Perhaps another artistic example of an expression seeking God's grace can be seen symbolically in the tile panel in the mosque of Ghars al-Dîn al-Khalîl al-Tawarîzî in Damascus (see Fig. 1).<sup>108</sup> There are three inter-related symbolic elements used in the enclosed *mihrab* shaped format. The *mihrab* was drawn on a hidden triangular structure which is one of the most stable visual elements used in a particular composition. First, at the apex of this triangular structure, is the word "Allâh"; this is then followed by a hanging lamp, and lastly there is a Qur'ân on a *rahl* (Qur'ân stand). Perhaps these three symbolic elements can best be seen in one of the verses in the Qur'ân:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: The Lamp enclosed in Glass: The glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose Oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce

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<sup>107</sup> Antiquities and Museums, Syrian Arab Republic. Museum No.: Damascus A. 6676. See Weiss, Harvey. (ed.). *Ebla to Damascus: Art and Archeology of Ancient Syria. An Exhibition from The Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums. Syrian Arab Republic.* (Washington, D. C., 1985), 509.

<sup>108</sup> J. Carswell, "Six Tiles" in *Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* ed. R. Ettinghausen (New York, 1972), 100.

touched it: Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light:  
God doth set forth Parables for men: and God doth know all things."

[*Sûrah* 24:35 (*al-Nûr*)].<sup>109</sup>

Furthermore, the sacredness of the Qur'ân is shown by simply having the right *niyyah* (intention) and by being clean when handling the word of God. Basically, 'cleanliness' from the Qur'ânic point of view is attained by following the prescribed method of *wudû* (ablution), as stated in the Qur'ân:

"When ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (And arms) to the elbows; rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles."<sup>110</sup>

[*Surâh* 5:7 (*al-Mâ'idah*)].

As for the scribe and illuminator who are involved in the production of the Qur'ân, they too must be in this state of ritual cleanliness. Apart from cleanliness of body and dress, the notion of cleanliness also covers other aspects such as space and furniture related to the Qur'ân. It is a common practice amongst Muslims that a clean reed or a pointer is normally used when reading a Qur'ân.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, one should try not to rest one's hands on an open-page Qur'ân when reciting. According to tradition, it is said that the Qur'ân must never be laid on the floor while reading, or placed anywhere below the torso. It must always occupy the highest place.<sup>112</sup> It is also recommended that a special sitting position is adopted while reading the Qur'ân

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<sup>109</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, pp.907-908.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.242-243.

<sup>111</sup> It is from the writers personal experience and observation in most Muslim countries in South East Asia that, a pointer is used when reading the Qur'ân.

<sup>112</sup> C. L. G. Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (Cambridge, 1994), 90.



(usually in a cross-legged position on the floor), so that people are instantly aware in their own bodies that this is not an ordinary book which they can read slumped in a chair.<sup>113</sup> As stated by al-Ghazâlî, one must face the *qiblah* when reading the Qur'ân and the head must be lowered as if sitting before a Master.<sup>114</sup> When in a standing position or walking, it is customary to place the Qur'ân on the head. This shows how Muslims try to train their bodies and minds to respect the Qur'ân.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps this act of respect is best illustrated in a woodcut print in an 18th-century book of Turkish costumes (see Fig. 2) which clearly depicts "a young man who carries on his head a Koran [*sic*] stand with the holy book, which is carefully covered with a piece of cloth".<sup>116</sup> This shows how it is of the utmost importance that the text remain pure and respected as the sacred word of God.

Symbolically, an open-page Qur'ân is usually placed facing upward by means of a specially built piece of furniture. This piece of furniture is called *rahl* (the same term is used in Arabic or Persian; in Turkish it is *rahle*)<sup>117</sup> and in English a "Qur'ân stand". It is said to be an Islamic invention<sup>118</sup> and is usually associated with the Qur'âns used in the madrasah, the mosque or any Muslim homes. Examples of the *rahl* can be seen in Fig. 3 and 4.

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<sup>113</sup> R. W. Maqsood, *The Qur'ân* (Oxford, 1993), 19.

<sup>114</sup> K. Murad, *Way to the Qur'ân* (Kuala Lumpur, 1985), 51.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>116</sup> R. Ettinghausen (ed), *Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1972), 308.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

A *rahl* can be appreciated at two levels. The first is from an 'analytical', 'descriptive' and 'dimensional' geometrical point of view. According to E. L. Schauermann:

"The natural artists, upon first contemplating original form, perceives every geometrical figure, geometry forming, as it were, a most important constituent of his brain-power; therefore geometry must be cultivated for the complete reproduction of objects of nature in diapered forms or types" <sup>119</sup>

Perhaps the reason for the invention of the *rahl* is to portray external abstract meaning in relation to the Qur'ân. A Qur'ân placed on a *rahl* will seem to be suspended in space. It actually rests on an axis where the two hidden structural lines of the *rahl* meet (see Ill. 1). Symbolically, it is to honour the Divine Word of God. Thus, while language is employed to explain, scientific construction conveys, by expressive metaphors, the hidden idea behind the concept for the construction of *rahl*. Otto Kurz claimed that, in relation to the invention of *rahl*, "Muhammadans are not in the habit of opening a book completely".<sup>120</sup> This view is entirely too simplistic and logically unacceptable. There are many levels of meaning and interpretation in the creation of a work of art, especially when its foundation has to do with belief, religion and culture pertaining to a particular civilisation.<sup>121</sup>

Second, from a designer's point of view, and practically, the *rahl* is a piece of mosque furniture designed to protect the Holy Book. Only by placing the Qur'ân, or

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<sup>119</sup> E. L. Schauermann, *Theory and Analysis of Ornament* (London, 1892), 7.

<sup>120</sup> O. Kurz, "Folding Chairs and Koran Stands" in *Islamic Art in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, ed. R. Ettinghausen (New York, 1972), 307.

<sup>121</sup> Erwin Panofsky gave three levels of interpretation in a work of art, in *Studies in Iconology: Huminitic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York, 1962), pp.14-15.

in fact any book for that matter, in a 'V'-shaped position, will the spine of the book or its binding be protected. Ergonomically, the design concept of 'form follows function', plus meaning, plays an important role in the overall design and glorification of the Qur'ân.

Thus, the nature of handling the Qur'ân too, directly or indirectly, has an effect on the page layout. The recitation of the Qur'ân is done on a personal basis; the text and the person are linked. Muslims believe that direct communication between man and God occurs through His revealed text. This happens especially during and after prayer. One can witness this act of recitation in any mosque or madrasah and in any Muslim's home. Normally the reciter will be seen in a cross-legged sitting position with the Qur'ân on the *rahl* in front of him. To the Persian, this sitting position is said to be the most relaxed position<sup>122</sup> for reading the Qur'ân. In cases where a Qur'ân stand is not available, normally the Qur'ân<sup>123</sup> will be placed on a special small clean cushion between two legs or on a lap.

There are at least two examples of miniature painting that can best illustrate the above discussion. First, the miniature painting by *Bihzad* in the *Khamsa* of Nizami, entitled "*Laila and Majnun at School*"<sup>124</sup> 900/1494 (see Fig. 5). The "interior

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<sup>122</sup> According to Sir John Chardin, there are cultural meanings attached to the sitting position in Persia. Different way of sitting carries different meaning ethically stated in chapter XI, "Of the temper, manners, and customs of the Persians" in *Travels in Persia* (London, 1927), pp.183-197.

<sup>123</sup> The writer is refering to the normal standard size Qur'ân which is impossible to hold by hands for a long time, except by resting it on a Qur'ân stand or anything that represent a 'Qur'ân stand'.

<sup>124</sup> British Museum. Or. 6810, folio 106 verso.

scene"<sup>125</sup> vividly depicts a Qur'ân reading session. Things related to the Qur'ân such as the *rahl*, the Qur'ân's box and bag, and also the act of book making are interestingly recorded in this painting. In the "exterior scene"<sup>126</sup>, the act of making one's ablutions can be seen in the red figure at the bottom right hand-side of the painting. The sequence of events in the composition, from the exterior scene to the interior scene, forms a complete story line for Qur'ân reading. The second example can be seen in a painting, dated 931-32/1524-25, from the *Khamisa* of Nizami<sup>127</sup> (see Fig. 6), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our attention focuses on the cross-legged sitting position figure in the foreground of the "interior scene". The Qur'ân is shown placed on the lap of the figure in replacement of a *rahl*. All these are familiar scenes happening in the 'Qur'ânic world' of recitation in those days and perhaps still happening in our own time.

In conclusion, the most sacred and precious treasure for the Muslim is the Qur'ân. Therefore, it is handled with care, love and respect. The religious spiritual relationship between the man, the text, the furniture (*rahl*), and its surrounding, plays an important aspect in the overall external design and copying of the Qur'ân. It is pertinent that this understanding, awareness and appreciation be known prior to the discussion of design as well as of meaning in illuminated Qur'âns. In the following chapters this area will be discussed in greater detail.

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<sup>125</sup> Muhammad Zain, *Formal*, 33.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> MMA. 13.228.7, fol. 129a. (Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran).



Fig. 1. Tile panels in the mosque of Ghars al-Dîn al-Khalîl al-Tawrîrî, Damascus.



Fig. 2. Servant carrying a Qur'ân stand, German woodcut 1724 A.D.





Fig. 3. Qur'ân stand made by the order of Ologh Beyg, Friday Mosque, Samarqand, ca. 1405-49. (Photo: Peter Brenner).

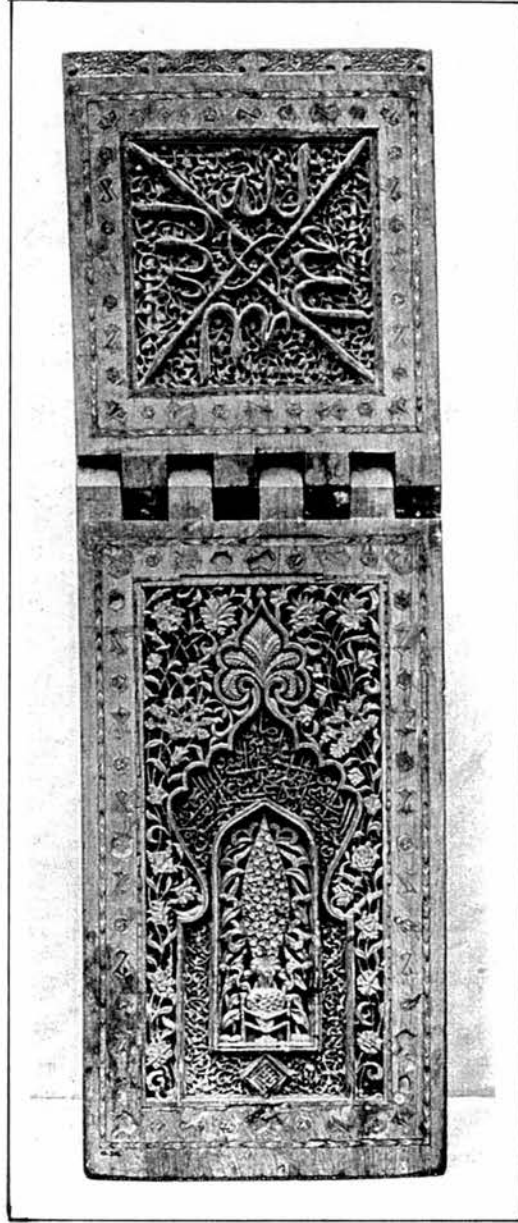
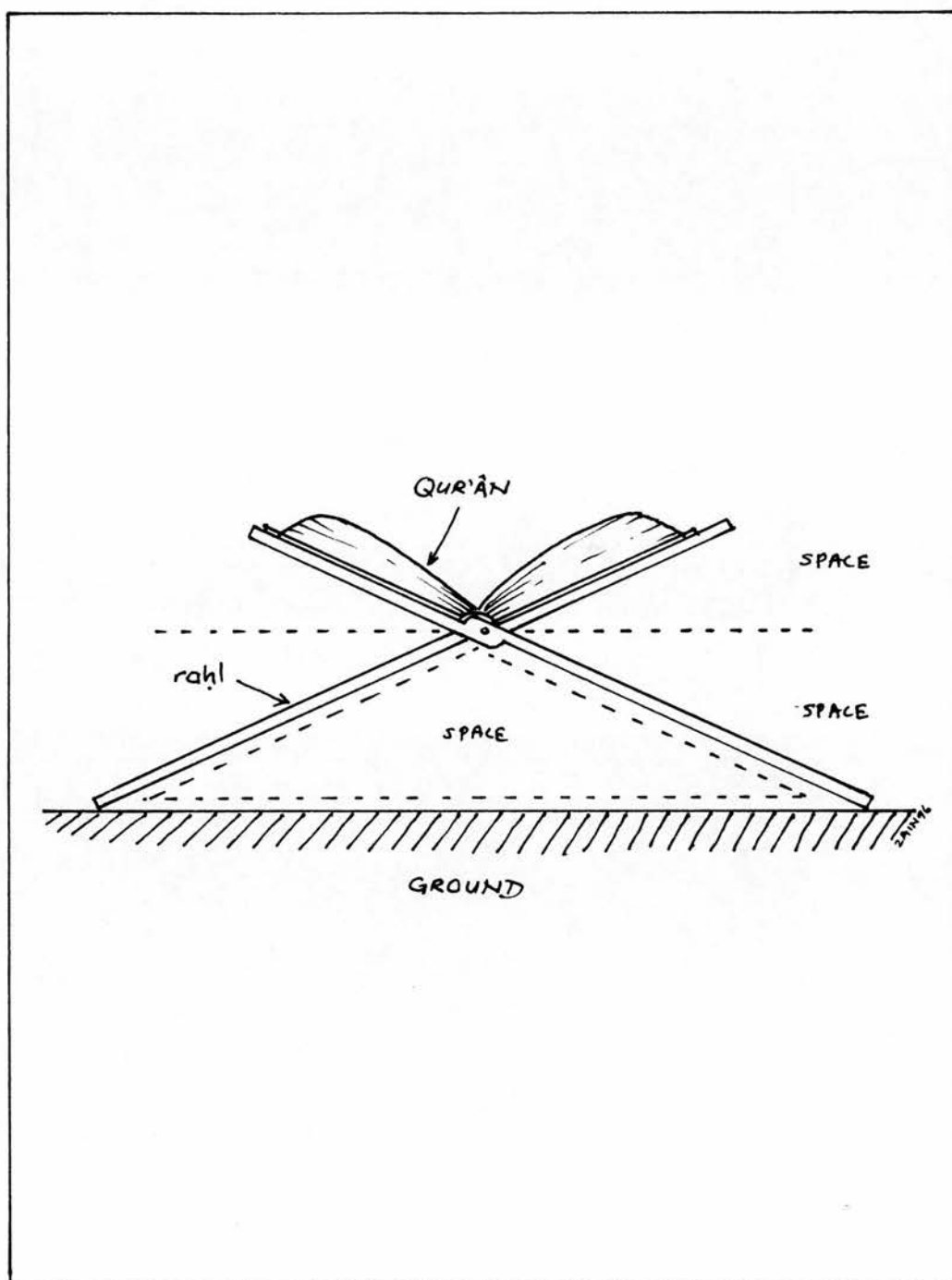


Fig. 4. Carved Qur'ân *rahl* 1360/1941. Metropolitan Museum of Art.



III. 1. Hidden structural lines of a *rahl*.

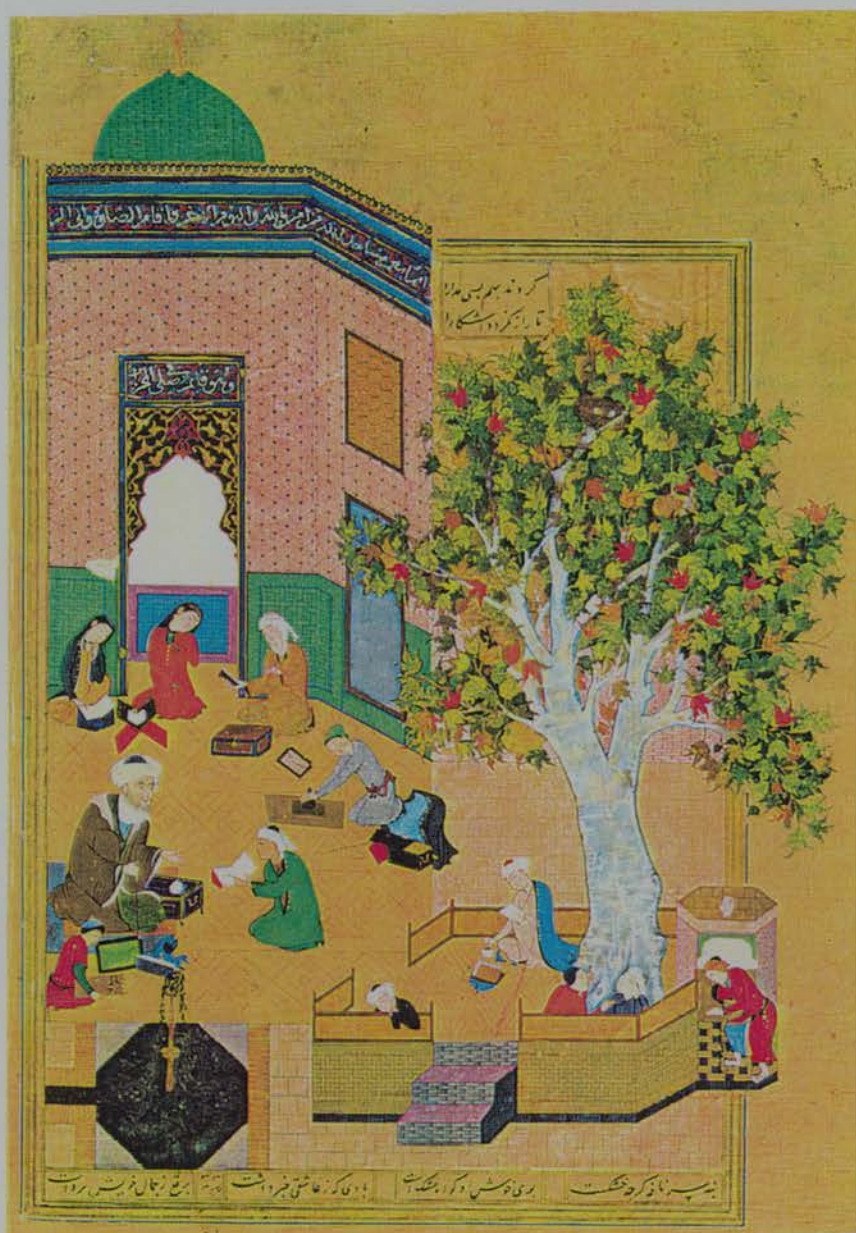


Fig. 5. Bihzad, *Khamsa* of Nizami, "Laila and Majnun at School" 900/1494.



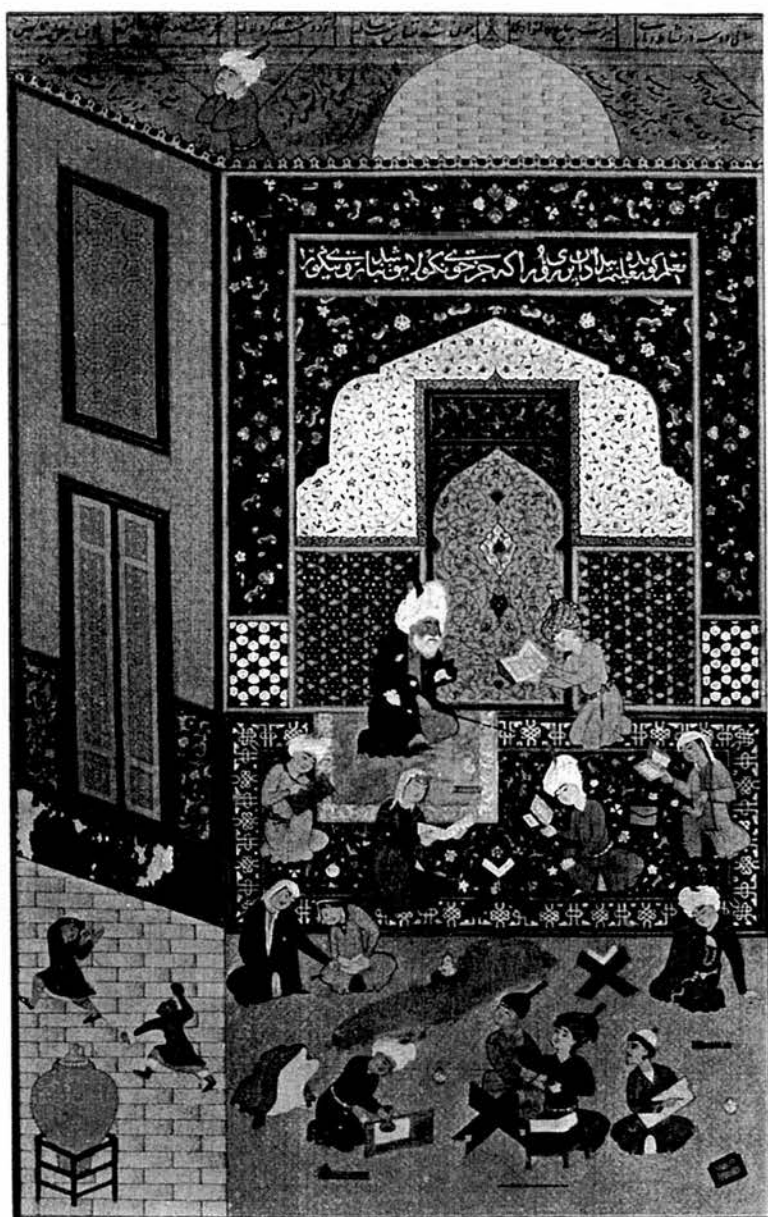


Fig. 6. *Khamsa* of Nizami, "Laila and Majnun at School" 931-2/1524-5. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. A gift of Alexander Smith Cochran.

## **Chapter 2**

### **1. The idea of visual formalism in Safavid Qur'âns**

#### **2. The text block**

#### **3. The area outside the text block**

##### **3.1 The concept of a double illuminated page**

##### **3.2. The canon of page construction**

##### **3.3. The arrangement of the page**

##### **3.4. The design technique**

##### **3.5. Ergonomic and art**

#### **4. The canon in colouring**

##### **4.1 The sequence of applying colours**

##### **4.1.1 The first group: Structuring the design**

##### **4.1.2 The second group: Colouring the design**

#### **5. Preliminary conclusion**



## 1. The idea of visual formalism in Safavid Qur'âns

"A visual formalism is a set of rules, methods and practices, which define [sic] a visual form acceptable to a group of people. If a formalism persists long enough it may be regarded as tradition. If it has only limited acceptance, limited value as a design aid, or exists for only a limited period it will generally be regarded as a fashion. It is suggested, [sic] that visual formalisms are important design aids for the day to day solving of aesthetic problems."<sup>1</sup>

Not many treatises on visual formalism in Islamic art exist. In the Safavid period people seem to have realised the need to document artistic treatises and commentaries in visual art.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, most of these treatises are on the art of writing. One possible way to understand the visual formalism of the Safavid period is to examine these. For Muslim artists, perhaps the root of visual vocabulary is in the art of calligraphy itself,<sup>3</sup> for example in working principles and mode of expression. This includes also Qur'ânic art. Two treatises are important here. These manuscripts are Qâdî Ahmad's treatise on "Calligraphers and Painters" (16th century) and Bâbâ Shâh Isfâhânî's *Âdâb al-mashq* (17th century). Both treatises deal with stylistic problems and rules in calligraphy. Perhaps these rules can also be interpreted and applied to the decorative aspects of illuminated Qur'ân during the Safavid period.

The master calligrapher Yâqût al-Muta<sup>c</sup>sîmî gave five elements for good writing, namely: "inking (*sawâd*), fair copying (*bayâz*), preparation (*tashmîr*), real rise

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<sup>1</sup> M. Krampen (ed.), *Design and Planning* (New York, 1965), 53.

<sup>2</sup> T. W. Lentz and G. D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1989), 168.

<sup>3</sup> A. Bahnassi, "The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art," *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture* 26/1 (1982), 84.

(*su'ûd-i haqîqî*), and real fall (*muzûl-i haqîqî*)".<sup>4</sup> Basically, the emphasis of Yâqût is that it is important for an artist thoroughly to understand the total artistic process before embarking on any creativity work. Similar emphasis can be found in later centuries. As stated in the epistle of Maulânâ Sultan <sup>C</sup>Alî in Qâdî Aḥmad's treatise on the form and rules of writing:

"The outward aspect of writing consists of the fundamentals (*uṣûl*) and the shape (*tarkîb*?), whereas the arrangement (*tartîb*) consists of "setting" (*kursî*) and proportions (*nisbât*). After these exist "the ascent" and "the descent", the *shamra* also plays its part and is accepted."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps these forms and rules in writing can be interpreted and broadened in usage to cover the compositional decorative aspect in Qur'ânic art. Basically, the concern is on the basic design (*uṣûl* and *tarkîb*) which is fundamental in any creative work. This basic design must be executed in an orderly manner (*tartîb*); that is, what needs to be drawn first and what is to follow. There must also be balance and proportion (*kursî* and *nisbât*) in the composition. Perhaps the question of "ascent" and "descent" can be interpreted as depth which is equally important in any composition. Last but not least, there must be some form of highlights or 'flourish' (*shamra*) in the overall composition to make the composition interesting.

Qâdî Aḥmad lists eight principles for the artist to follow in order to produce an excellent work of art. These principles were later expanded into twelve by Bâbâ Shâh. In Bâbâ Shâh's treatise, the first nine principles deal with style and the last three

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<sup>4</sup> C. W. Ernst, "The Spirit of Islamic Calligraphy: Bâbâ Shâh Isfahânî's *Âdâb al-mashq*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112/2 (1992), 283.

<sup>5</sup> Qâdî Aḥmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 117.

go beyond style. Also, it is at this stage that the attainment of mastery can be seen.<sup>6</sup>

These principles are:

1. Composition (*tarkīb*).
2. Equal height of similar letters (*kursī*).
3. Proportion (*nisbāt*).
4. Weakness (*za<sup>c</sup>f*) in round strokes.
5. Strength (*quwwat*) in long strokes.
6. Width (*sath*).
7. Length (*dūr*).
8. Apparent rise (*su<sup>c</sup>ūd-i majāzī*).
9. Apparent fall (*muzūl-i majāzī*).
10. Principle (*uṣūl*), is based on a skilful control of the nine stylistic parts (above).
11. Purity (*ṣafā'*) is primarily a quality of the heart that is the inner source of beauty.
12. Authority (*sha'n*) is the mystical state, or contemplation of divine beauty.<sup>7</sup>

Basically, one can find similarities in the working principles listed by both Qâḍî Ḥmad and Bâbâ Shâh. For Qâḍî Ḥmad, there must be some form of order and highlights in a composition but these elements are not found in Bâbâ Shâh's principles. Instead, Bâbâ Shâh cautioned against weaknesses in round strokes, and emphasised the strength in straight strokes, plus width and length in a composition. All these elements are pertinent, especially in the structure of a composition. Perhaps Bâbâ Shah's advice can be interpreted as leading to horizontal, vertical, diagonal and circular lines; these are the elements of good structure in a composition.

The illuminated Safavid Qur'âns studied in this thesis suggest that it is possible to establish some broad categories of visual formalism or visual convention on the

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<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, 283.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 283-4.

basis of these treatises.<sup>8</sup> At least some of the stylistic principles listed above could be used to reveal some hidden formula in certain illuminated Qur'âns.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps, on the basis of Qâḍî Aḥmad's and Bâbâ Shâh's principles, some deductions about style can be made. A work of art must have proper composition; balance; proportion; weakness and strength; width; length; and depth. These principles are identifiable in the decorative composition of many illuminated Safavid Qur'âns. All these principles are actually in the realm of style and relate to the physical aspect of a work of art. Another important aspect is the artist himself. He must be a skilful artist who has undergone a long period of training under the supervision of a master. Lastly, according to Bâbâ Shâh, an artist possess purity of heart and be able to contemplate divine beauty. This is of course a spiritual aspect and it is in the realm of philosophy as well as aesthetics. In many ways, this level relates to al-Ghazâlî's concept of beauty, that is, the beauty of any work of art is actually a reflection of the beauty of the heart. And, on the highest level, the beauty of the heart relates to the contemplation of divine beauty as a whole.<sup>10</sup> Since Qur'ânic illumination is a religious art, the highest level of beauty relates to the divine beauty of God Himself. It is also believed that "a beautiful object was naturally thought to be the ideal carrier of *barakah* or good

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<sup>8</sup> According to A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "writing and painting are seen as two branches of the same art", in his chapter on 'The Aesthetics of Islam' in *Treasures of Islam* (New Jersey, 1985), 22.

<sup>9</sup> According to Dr. Gerd-R. Puin, in his article on "Method of Research on Qur'ânic Manuscripts — A Few Ideas", the dating of an undated Qur'ân can be achieved by such secondary features as illumination. See *Masâhif San'â'* (Kuwait, 1985), 10.

<sup>10</sup> M. Smith, *Al-Ghazali: The Mystic* (London, 1944), 122. See R. Ettinghausen, 'Al Ghazzâlî on Beauty' in *Islamic Art and Archaeology: Collected Papers* (Berlin, 1984), pp.16-21. See C. Hillenbrand, "Some Aspects of al-Ghazâlî's View on Beauty " in *Festschrift for A. M. Schimmel*, ed. A. Giese and J. C. Bürgel, *Gott ist schön und Er lieb die Schönheit. God is beautiful and He loves beauty* (Bern, 1994), pp.249-266.

luck".<sup>11</sup> Therefore, these treatises could well be reference documents for artists working on Qur'âns. Areas which show the kind of visual formalism or sets of aesthetic rules used by such artists in Safavid period will be discussed in the sections which follow:

The form taken by these Qur'âns — i.e. mainly their format, script and illumination — takes on special importance because of the frequent absence of the scribe's, the illuminator's and the patron's name in them. Very rarely can one find such names documented in Safavid Qur'âns. In most instances there are none.<sup>12</sup> This is probably due to the common belief amongst Muslims that there should not be any other written words beside the word of God in the Qur'ân.<sup>13</sup> The reason for this is simply to preserve its purity and so as not to confuse holy writ with any human words. This concern is so deep that even when printing technology from China came into existence in Tabriz, the scribes/illuminators were not willing to exploit it<sup>14</sup> simply because of the fear that the Qur'ân could easily be corrupted. The Qur'ân has always rested upon written tradition<sup>15</sup> and its authenticity is always checked and protected.

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<sup>11</sup> See R. Ettinghausen in his paper on 'Originality and Conformity in Islamic Art' in *Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam: Fifth Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference*, May 23-25, 1975, Gustave E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. Ed. by A. Banani and S. Vryonis, Jr. (Wiesbaden, 1977), 109.

<sup>12</sup> James, *QB*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "Qur'ânic Orthography: The Written Representation of the Recited Text of the Qur'ân," *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture* 38/3 (1994), 180.

<sup>14</sup> Rashid al-Din knew about this new development and mentioned it in his *World History*. But his workshop still maintained the old tradition in book production, that is by writing all the books individually. See T. F. Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China and its Spread Westward* (New York, 1955), 172.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.



Also, perhaps due to abundance of scribes/illuminators as well as craftsmen, there was no warrant for change to take place. Furthermore, there is no comparison between artistic skill and that of a mechanical production.<sup>16</sup>

If any other words need to be written in the Qur'ân, they will usually be found on a separate sheet or page, either at the beginning or at the end of the Qur'ân. Such writing is considered as not being part of the Qur'ân. The name of the patron, the scribe and the illuminator, are usually found written in either of these pages, or by means of a seal which is commonly found at the beginning or at the end of the text. It is very unlikely that this seal be found within the text.

On the other hand, if ever non-Qur'ânic words need to be in the text, they can usually be found outside the specified text area, for example at the head margin, fore-edge margin or tail margin. Normally what was written in the head and tail margin is the word *waqf* or endowment that is, "it was under the charge of the librarian of the mosque or madrasah or shaykh of the khânqâh (dervish 'monastery') and was never to be sold, pawned or loaned"<sup>17</sup> (Pl. 1)<sup>18</sup>. The word *waqf*, in black script, is commonly found written right across the head and tail margin. It is not part of the sacred text.

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<sup>16</sup> The earliest Egyptian block prints of the Qur'ân: *sûrah* 34 *âyât* 1-6, found at Ushmûnein, near al-Fayûm, circa early 10th century [Erzherzog Rainer Collection, (10.5 x 11 cm)], vividly show the low quality of the print as compared to the handwritten Qur'ân of its time. This is even more true if we compare to Safavid Qur'âns with lithographed or printed copies. Therefore, printing technology did not win the heart of the scribe/illuminator at that time. Ibid., pl.2 of page 169.

<sup>17</sup> James, *QB*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> CBL Ms. 1539 (Arberry no.165).



To Muslims, the word *waqf*, besides its literal meaning in the Qur'ân, also encompasses moral values.

Other than the word *waqf*, one can also find written commentaries surrounding the framed text of the Qur'ân. Commentaries were normally written each within - its own strictly defined area. This can be at the inner fore-edge margin or at the inner tail margin (Pl. 2).<sup>19</sup> The script type is also different from that of the main text itself. In the Safavid period, it will usually be of the *nastâ'liq* type. These commentaries, normally in the Persian language, were written freely in a slanting manner which again clearly separates them from the main text. Sometimes, one has to turn the Qur'ân upside down, or turn it around, in order to be able to read these commentaries. Most of them were written in red ink simply to differentiate them from the verses of the Qur'ân. Perhaps this is an extension of the concept and technique already introduced in the days of <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Malik (685), in order to avoid misreading of the sacred text.<sup>20</sup> Commentaries were, of course, meant to facilitate the teaching of the Qur'ân. This type of Qur'ân may be meant more for a scholar or religious teacher and perhaps less for layman. Or perhaps, this type of Qur'ân with commentaries was specifically ordered by an institution. The way that the commentaries were written ensures zero interference with the main text. Occasionally, one may find some daring examples whereby the commentaries were written within the main columns stipulated for the text. This is not to contradict the earlier statement. Close observation will reveal that even in this very daring attempt to write commentaries within the text, these commentaries were again written in red ink, in the Persian language and enclosed or confined within their stipulated margin. In terms of size of the script, the

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<sup>19</sup> CBL Ms.1545 (Arberry no.162).

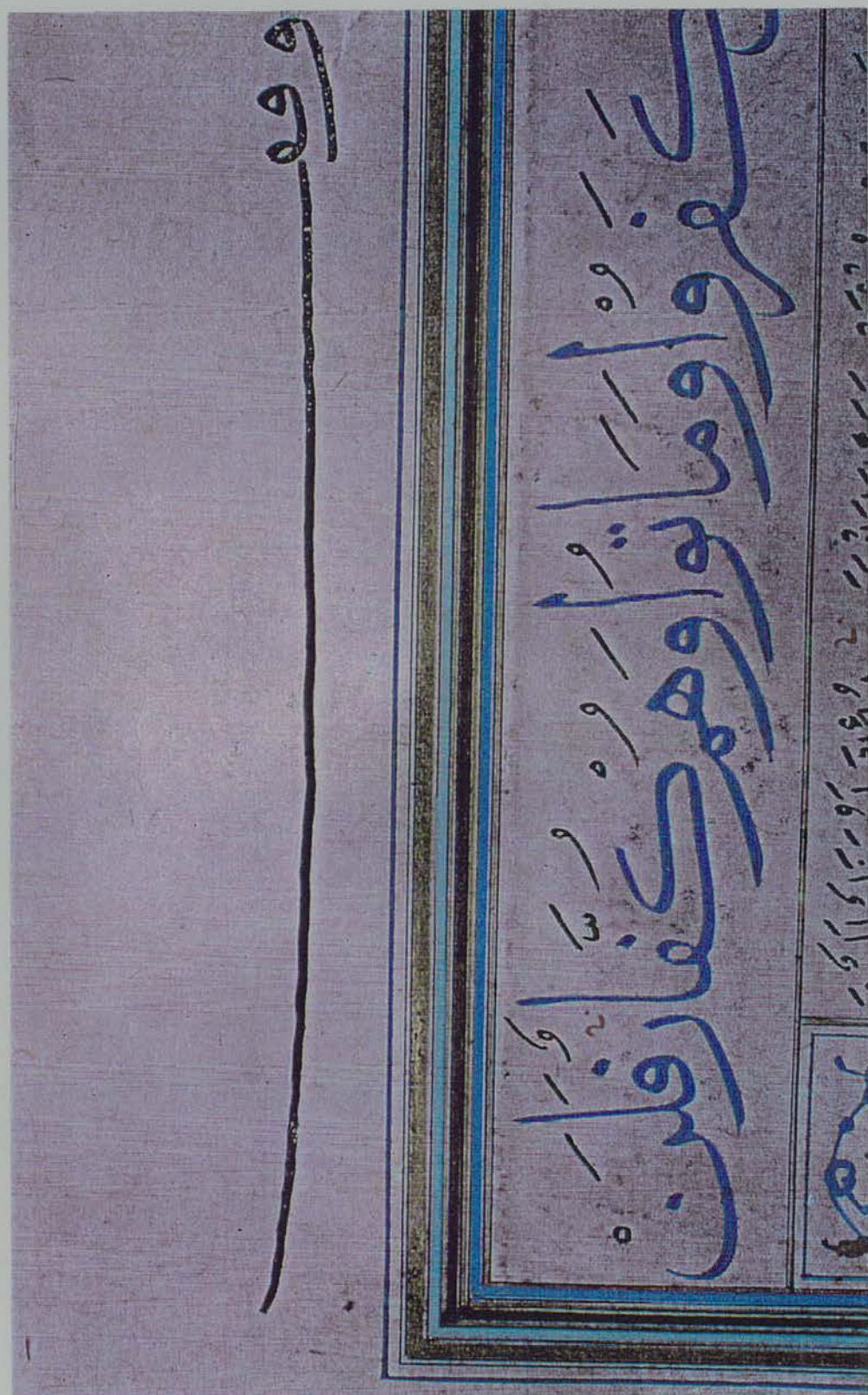
<sup>20</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, 4.

commentary is always written smaller than the main text (Pl. 3),<sup>21</sup> thereby suggesting that, even at this minute level, there is a demarcation between human words and the words of God. The integrity of the Qur'ânic text is always paramount.<sup>22</sup> If there are going to be any other non-Qur'ânic words in the Qur'ân, these words will be separated by whatever means a scribe/illuminator could device.

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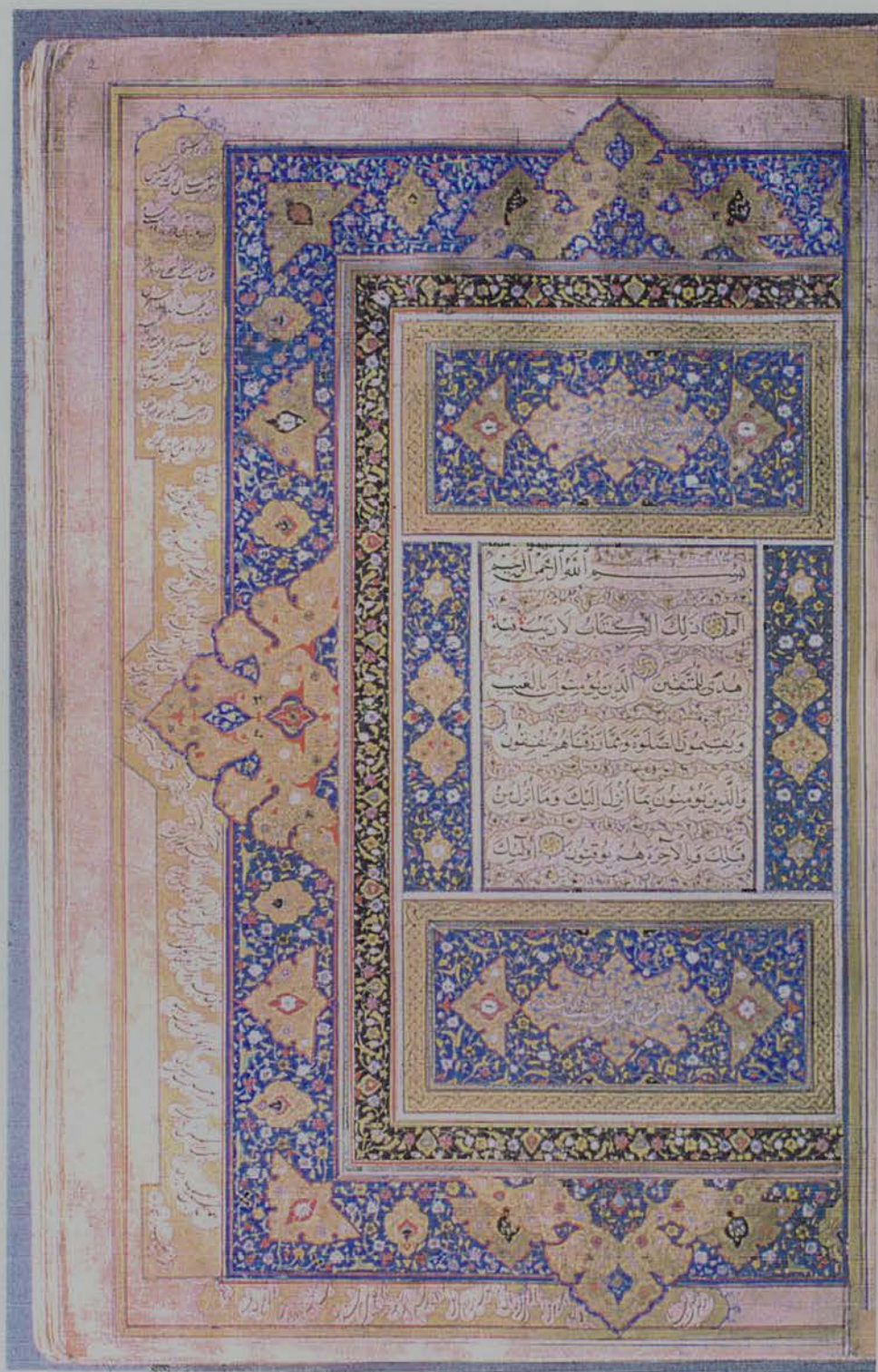
<sup>21</sup> British Library. OR. 1340.

<sup>22</sup> M. Abû Laylâ, "The Qur'ân: Nature, Authenticity, Authority and Influence on the Muslim Mind," *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture* 36 (1992), 238.



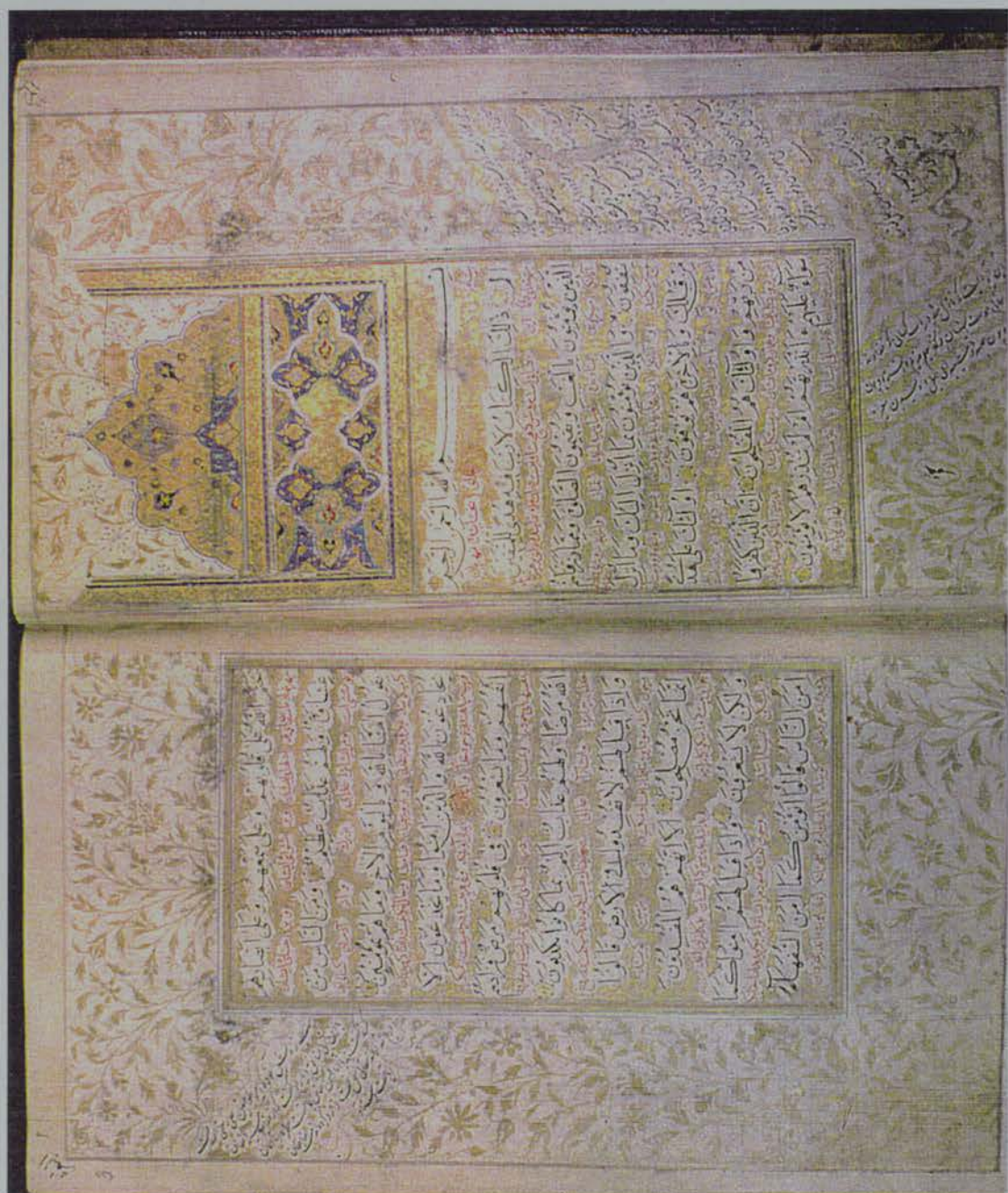
Pl. 1. A close-up of the word *waqf* in the head margin of a typical Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1539 (Arberry no. 165).





Pl. 2. Commentaries written at the inner fore-edge and tail margins of a Qur'ân.  
 CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).





Pl. 3. Commentaries written in red ink within the text block.  
Bristish Library, OR. 1340.

## 2. The text block

First and foremost, it is highly probable that the production of an illuminated Safavid Qur'ân begins with the writing itself<sup>23</sup> and not with the decoration. This is because the most important aim is to have all the text correctly copied and legible to its reader. Only after this comes the decoration or illumination. The decoration can either begin immediately after each page has been written, or when the whole Qur'ân is finished. Another important aspect is perhaps the time taken to copy a single Qur'ân. This may be a crucial factor, especially when there is a target date to meet. A famous calligrapher like Yâqût took thirty days to complete two Qur'âns, though this would have been of ordinary format.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, a large format Qur'ân took ʿAbd al-Rahmân ibn al-Sâ'igh (a famous 15th-century Mamlûk calligrapher) sixty days to complete.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps an average of one to two months was enough for a less famous calligrapher to complete Qur'ân of ordinary size (any Qur'ân that has the size of between 300 x 180mm and 395 x 280mm). Furthermore, it is also pertinent that the text is beautifully written within a short period of time.<sup>26</sup> As Al-Kindi says *à propos* in the nature of Arabic writing:

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<sup>23</sup> See F. Shâfi'î in his section on 'Decoration of a Qur'ân', in *Simple Calyx Ornament in Islamic Art (A Study in Arabesque)* (Cairo, 1956), 212.

<sup>24</sup> James, *QB*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>26</sup> M. Levey, "Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arabic Bookmaking," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 52/4 (1962), 6.



"I do not know of any other form of writing in which the letters undergone so much beautifying and refining as they do in Arabic writing. It also makes possible greater speed than can be attained in other forms of writing."<sup>27</sup>

Taking various factors into consideration, probably the best period for copying the Qur'ân is when the day is longer than the night. A scribe/illuminator works better with natural light than with candle-light or lamp-light. As Qâdî Ahmad states in the epistle of Maulânâ Sultan ʿAlî: "*Qalamî* is the exercise in reproduction, exercising small (writing) during the day and large (writing) in the evening".<sup>28</sup> This vividly shows the suitability of writing in a given way at certain periods of the day. Thus the availability of natural light is a crucial factor. The scribe/illuminator will be able to achieve correct writing as well as the correct tones (for decoration) in his work depending on which period of the day he is working. If this is indeed the case, decoration and illumination would have to be done during the day and less at night.

In a Qur'an<sup>29</sup> in the Glasgow University Library, the illuminated pages are enhanced by a slight bending of the page and the illumination in gold and silver is less obvious if the page lies flat. There are many surprises when light touches a convex or concave surface on the page. In this particular Qur'an, there are plant and animal motifs depicted in gold. The plant motifs are those that are familiar in most secular 17th-century manuscripts<sup>30</sup> that is, flowering plants, short tree-trunks and bonsai-like

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<sup>27</sup> al-Nadim-Dodge, *Fihrist*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 117.

<sup>29</sup> MS GEN 1015. Acquired by purchase from the Glasgow bookseller John Smith in 1954. First published by Archibald Guthrie in the *Transactions of Glasgow University Oriental Society* 15 (Glasgow, 1953-4), pp.36-43.

<sup>30</sup> The plant motif is quite similar to that found in a painting titled "Khosrow Soltân Holding A Falcon", attributed to Muhammad Yusuf, probably Isfahân mid-17th century. See A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts: Selection from the Art and*

plants. Starting from folio 2a onwards, the text block was painted with silver and gold flowering plants disposed in a zig-zag manner. But on folios 8a and 9a there is a change in composition. These folios contain animal and plant motifs in silver as well as gold outline. It is more of a landscape painting rather than the repeat pattern composition within the text block as shown in folio 2a. The animal motifs consist of fishes and birds, apparently pelican, or cranes and phoenixes (see Pl. 4 and Ill. 1). Apparently, they were lightly painted over the text, thus creating a transparent effect while still maintaining the legibility of the text. In the research for this thesis, this is the only Qur'ân (probably of late 17th-century Safavid date) that has come to light with such motifs, though these are familiar in most secular manuscripts of the time. At first glance, one may not notice the background decoration of the text. These motifs are thus not as obvious as those in the Qur'âns offered for sale by Sotheby's (Lot 131, 4th April 1978, and Lot 51, 6th July 1981). Lot 131 (Eastern Turkey, 1166/1752), contained 14 different miniatures painted in the margins of this particular Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen *Sûrah Maryam* (see Pl. 5), that contains the depiction of the "Blessed Virgin Mary" painted on a gold floral design.<sup>31</sup> The illuminated headpiece consists of floral illustration on a blue ground and the figures of two angels emptying golden vessels. The illustration was probably the work of an Armenian artist.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, lot 51 (Deccan, 18th century) contained a portrait of the upper half of the face of a female figure with ray-like hair in the margin of the text. Beneath this portrait is a beast probably a lion or a tiger (see Pl. 6).<sup>33</sup> Comparable

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*History Trust Collection* (New York, 1992), pl.122.

<sup>31</sup> See Sotheby's, 4 April 1978, 67.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> These are rare examples which need further investigation; they are not within the scope of this thesis.



examples of faces with rayed or sun-burst-like lines and a beast, can be seen in the entrance portals of the Lab-i Hawz complex, in Bukhârâ, completed in 1030/1620 and in the Shirdar madrasa in Samarqand dated 1025-46/1616-36.<sup>34</sup> This combining concept of a portrait within the sunburst and a lion can be seen as early as in the Rum Seljuq dirham of Ghiyath al-Dîn Kaykhusraw II from Qunya, 640/1242-3,<sup>35</sup> but this iconography changes slightly in Safavid coins, which depict only a half-face portrait within a sunburst and the lion. An example of this can be seen in the collection of Mr. Parviz Tanavoli: a Safavid copper coin from Isfâhân dated 1124/1712.<sup>36</sup> Such images are very similar to the above mentioned Qur'ân. By the Mughal period the sunburst no longer contains a facial depiction. This can be seen in a Mughal coin minted during the reign of Nûr al-Dîn Jahangir and dated 1020/1611.<sup>37</sup>

Probably the first consideration for a scribe is his perception of how the text should be presented. The existing examples of Safavid Qur'âns suggest that a particular system is being used. This system is a double-page layout. The text has to begin from the right hand side and not from the left.<sup>38</sup> It is very rare to find a *Sûrah* 1 that begins from on left hand side of the book. If it is found in that position, it is

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<sup>34</sup> See Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250-1800* (London, 1994), pls.259 and 261.

<sup>35</sup> Michael I. Bates and Robert E. Darley-Doran, "The Art of Islamic Coinage" in *Treasure of Islam* (New Jersey, 1985), pl.532.

<sup>36</sup> P. Tanavoli, *Lion Rugs from Fars*, tr. Jay R. Crook and John Wertime (Kashani, 1978), p.21, pl.2.

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl.563.

<sup>38</sup> It is very unlikely for any Qur'ân to begin from left to right. The statement by Jean-Jacques Lévêque that the early Qur'an scrolls were written in sections from left to right is probably not true. See J. Lévêque, 'Koranic Paintings' in *Islamic and Indian Painting*, tr. R. Brain (Geneva, 1970), 29.

highly probable that the page was added at a later date or taken from another Qur'ân. In such cases, one can easily detect differences in the quality of writing, paper, decoration, as well as illumination. Perhaps to an 'uneducated' person, it does not matter on which side the text begins, so long as it is a complete text. Probably this is acceptable if the Qur'ân belongs to an individual who is less concerned about matters outside the text itself. If that is the case, that particular person can be considered insensitive to the overall teaching of the Qur'ân. As can be found in the Qur'ân and *al-hadith*, to perform *wudû'* (ablution),<sup>39</sup> one has to begin from the right hand first, which is then followed by the left hand. Similarly, in most cases, the layout of the Qur'ân begins with *Sûrah* 1 first on the right and not on the left-hand side of the page. In fact, to any Muslim, it has already been accepted as natural, and internalised in their behaviour as something that is culturally right and observing with the teaching of Islam. Even today as an example, in a Muslim community, to give something to someone with a left hand is considered rude and not reflecting the Islamic way of behaviour. Almost every good thing has to begin from the right. Thus, spiritually, it can be seen as an unstated rule and quite natural that the layout plan for the Qur'ân begins from the right. Therefore, the reader's immediate perception is that the text comes first, to be followed by the layout and other aspects. In other words, the text will always determine the layout. Obviously, it has to be a double page layout concept, whether or not there is any illumination.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 1 page 25.

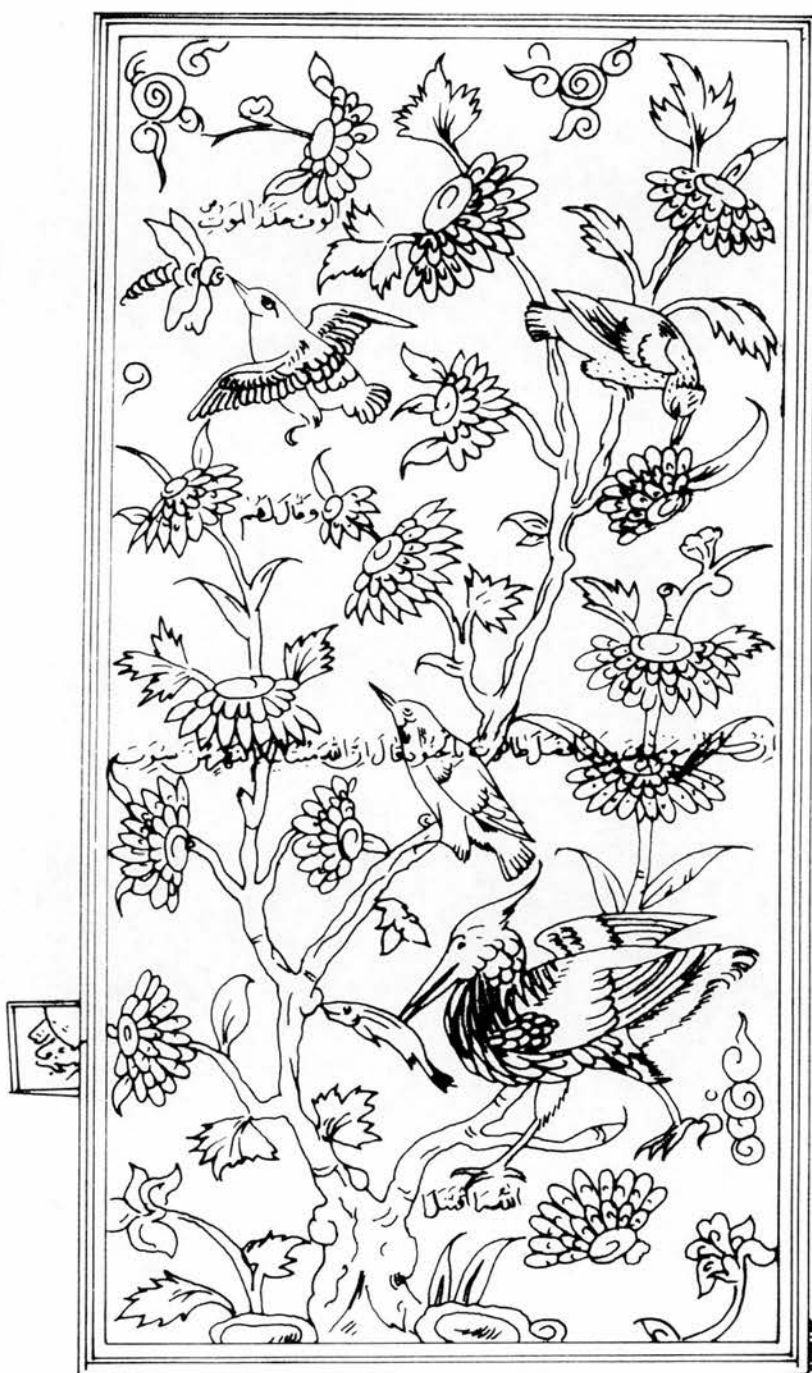
<sup>40</sup> Apart from the spiritual justification for the layout plan, there is also a practical design formula used by the scribe/illuminator for the layout of the Qur'ân. A discussion of the style of layout design can be found in the following chapter.



تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ. وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِشَاغٍ أَفْعَلُ  
عَبْرَ أَخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ فِيهَا فَمَنْ فِيهَا مِنْ غَيْرٍ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُ  
حِكْمًا وَلِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَسْمَاءُ مَتَاعٌ بِالْعَرُوفِ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ. كَذَلِكَ يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ. أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ  
اللَّهُ مَوْتُوهُمْ أَنَا اللَّهُ لَذُوقُوا فَلَمْ يَذُوقُوا فَلَمْ يَلْزَمُوا النَّاسَ وَلَا يَكْفُرُونَ. وَ  
فَاتَّبَعُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ. مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَفْرِضُ اللَّهُ قُرْآنًا حَسَنًا وَضَائِعًا  
لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْضِي وَبَيِّنُهَا لِيَوْمِ تَحْجُوتُ. أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَنَافِقِينَ يَدْعُونَ  
مَنْ بَعْدَهُمْ وَهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ آلِيهِمْ بِهِمْ النَّبِيُّ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ عَدُوُّكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ  
الْقِتَالُ أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ وَمَا لِلنَّاسِ أَنْ يَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَآبَاءِهِمْ قَاتِلًا  
كَتَبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ قَوْلَ الْأَوَّلِينَ مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ الْظَّالِمِينَ. وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ  
بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا فَاتَّبِعُونَا إِنَّهُ خَيْرٌ لَنَا مِنْكُمْ وَلَهُ أَمْرٌ عَظِيمٌ. فَخَرَجُوا مَعَهُ  
سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ ابْتَخَارَ بَيْنَكُمْ سَبْعَ نَهَارٍ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ فَأُولَئِكَ لِيَّ وَالَّذِي  
مَنْ بَعَثَ اللَّهُ وَسَبْعَ عَلَيْهِمْ. وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ  
مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْكُفُّورُ وَالْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةُ لَكُمْ  
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ. فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ  
مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ  
يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْكُوا اللَّهَ كَرِهُوا قَائِلَهُ غُلِبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَقِيَّةُ الْكَفَرَةِ بَادَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ  
وَالَّذِينَ ظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ يُلَاقُونَ اللَّهَ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِمْ صَابِرِينَ قَالُوا تَبَا وَتَبَا وَتَبَا وَتَبَا وَتَبَا وَتَبَا وَتَبَا  
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هُمُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ  
يَتْلُوهُ اللَّهُ النَّاسُ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ الْقِسْطَ الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ دُفْقُورٌ عَلَى  
الْعَالَمِينَ. تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ تَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ. تِلْكَ لَرُسُلُ اللَّهِ  
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ تَكْتُمُ اللَّهُ رُفْعَ بَعْضِهِمْ وَدَرَجَاتٍ وَأَيُّهَا عِلْمُكَ مِنْ رَبِّهِ الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَأَيُّهَا يَرْسُوحُ الْفَدَسُ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَفْتَنَّا الَّذِينَ يَنْتَحِلُونَ مِنْ بَعْضِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَ نَفْعُ الْبَيِّنَاتِ  
وَالَّذِينَ اخْتَلَعُوا مِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَفْتَنَّا الَّذِينَ يَنْتَحِلُونَ مِنْ بَعْضِهِمْ  
مَا يَرْبُدُ إِلَّا تِلْكَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ الْأَمْرِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

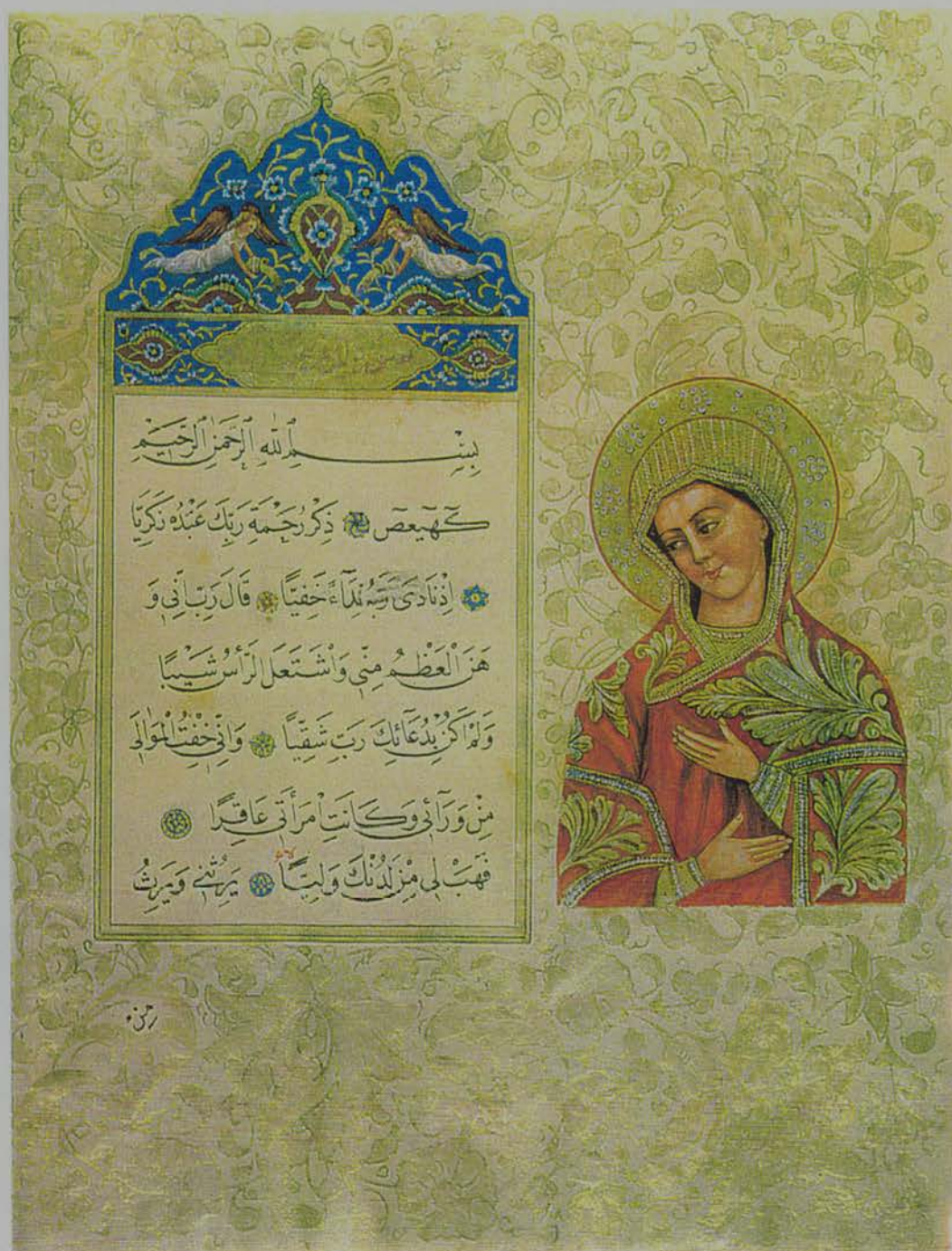


Pl. 4. The plant and animal motifs in the Qur'ân.  
Glasgow University Library, Ms. GEN 1015.

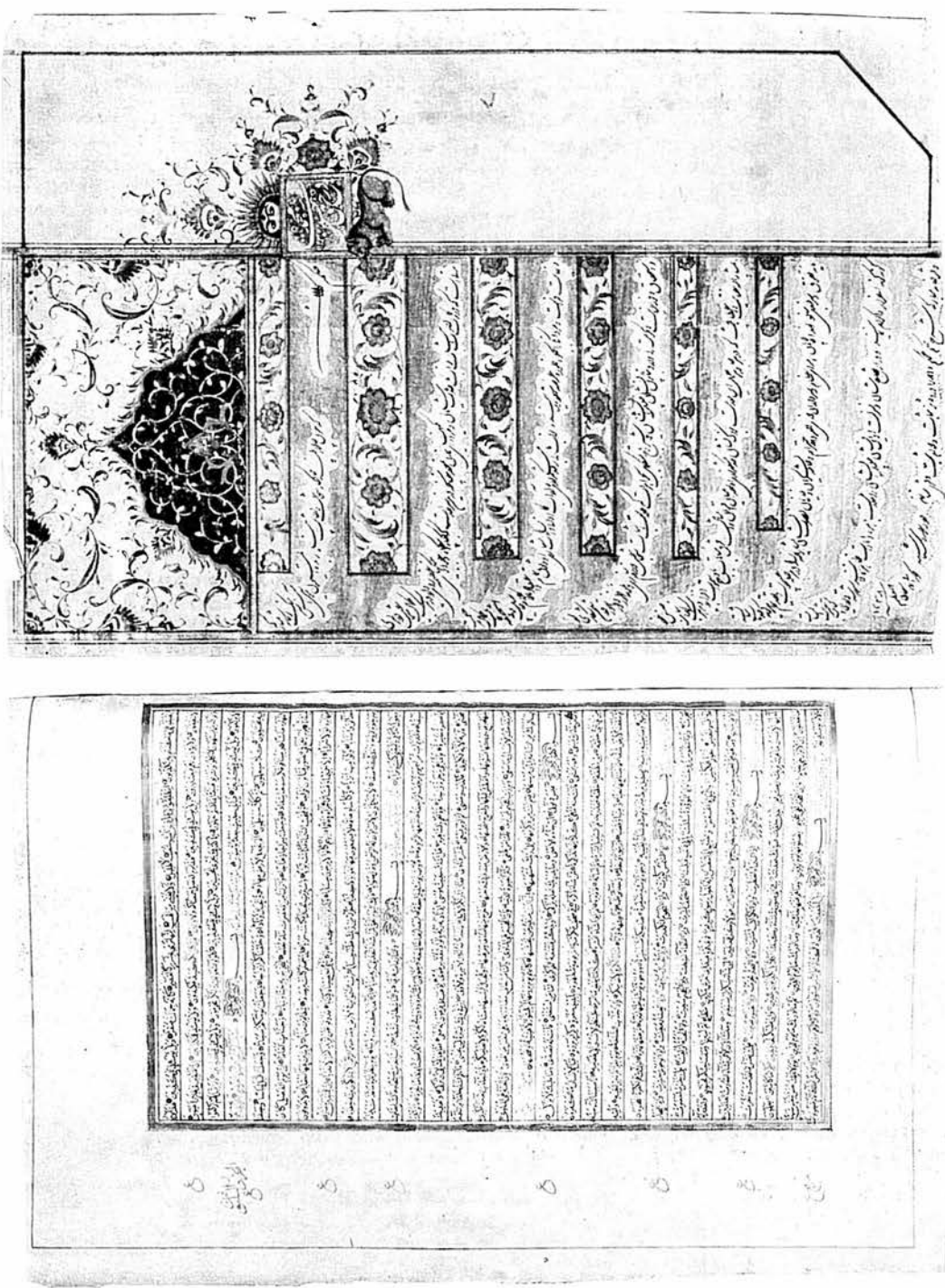


III. 1. The plant and animal motifs in the Qur'ân.  
Glasgow University Library, Ms. GEN 1015.





Pl. 5. *Sûrah* 19, from Eastern Turkey, dated 1166/1752.  
 Sotheby's, 4 April 1978, lot 131.



Pl. 6. Qur'ân from Deccan, datable 18th century. Sotheby's, 6 July 1981, lot 51.

### 3. The area outside the text block

#### 3.1 The concept of double illuminated pages

As stated earlier, in any illuminated page layout, if the first page is mainly *Sûrah* 1, the following page has to be part of *Sûrah* 2 (see Pl. 7).<sup>41</sup> There are also examples of *Sûrah* 1 spread over two pages (see Pl. 8).<sup>42</sup> If this is the case, one will definitely find the following two pages, containing part of *Sûrah* 2 (especially the beginning part) illuminated too (see Pl. 9).<sup>43</sup> This examples also shows that these next two pages were given illumination of similar type to that of *Sûrah* 1. Of course, both *sûrahs* have entirely different designs, so they are adequately separated. Another example is when both *sûrahs* — i.e. all of *Sûrah* 1 and first *âyah* of *Sûrah* 2 — are on the same page. Again, one will find that the following page — which continues with *sûrah* 2 — will also be decorated or illuminated. An example of this can be seen in a single-volume Qur'ân datable ca. 1550-1600, from Iran, in the Khalili collection.<sup>44</sup> This system or concept is also reflected in the closing pages of the Qur'ân. Usually the last *sûrah*, that is *Sûrah al-Ikhlâs*, will be on the right-hand page too, or at least will cover two illuminated pages. If this last *sûrah* ends on the right-hand page, then the following page on the left will normally be about the correct reading of the Qur'ân, the *falnama* or *duâ' i-khatam* (see Pl. 10).<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the application of this illuminated double-page concept can also be found at the centre of the Qur'ân.

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<sup>41</sup> CBL Ms.1553 (Arberry no.173).

<sup>42</sup> CBL Ms.1544 (Arberry no.154).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Khalili, QUR206. See James, *AT*, pl.48.

<sup>45</sup> British Library. OR. 1341.



Usually it will be at the beginning of *Sûrah al-Kahfi*. The beginning of *Sûrah al-Kahfi* can be either on the right or on the left page. Whatever the case may be, one will always find that both pages are illuminated. In short, these illuminated pages are always depicted in pairs, right and left, perhaps also thereby reflecting the symmetrical concept in design.



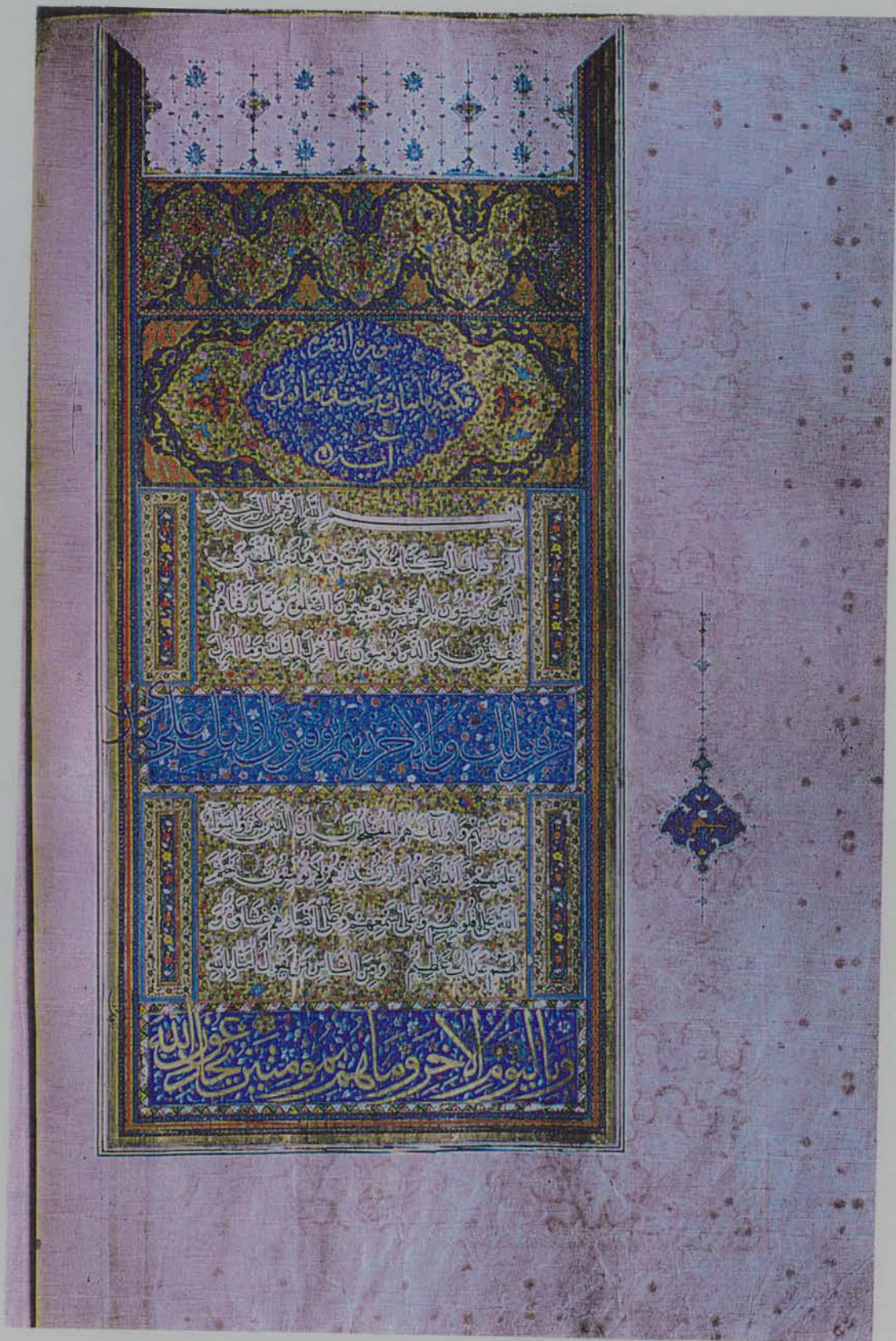
Pl. 7. *Sûrah* 1 and part of *Sûrah* 2. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no. 173).





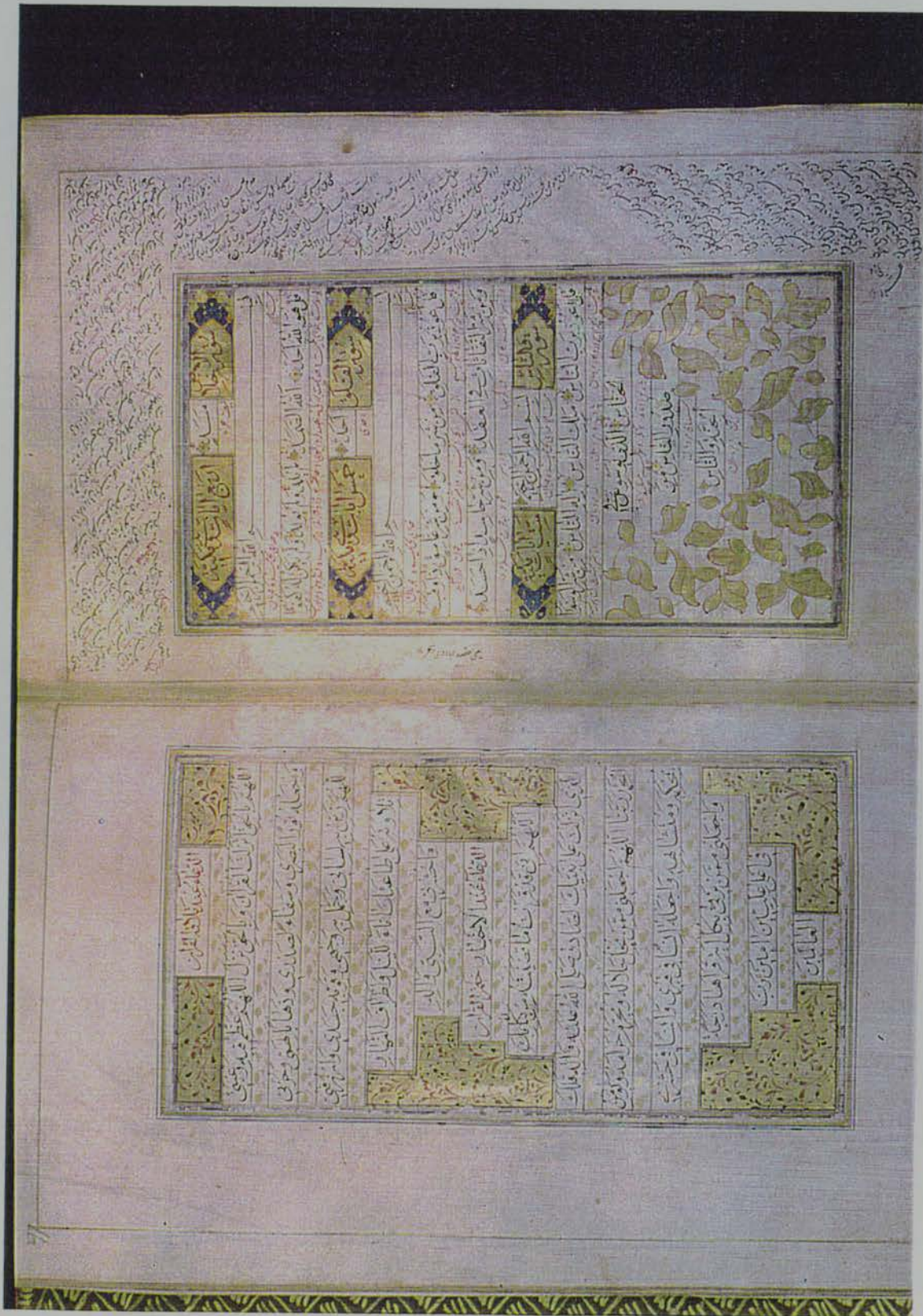
Pl. 8. *Sûrah* 1 spread over two pages. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).





Pl. 9. Part of Sûrah 2. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).





Pl 10. The *fahnama* or *duʿāʾ i-khatam* in a Qurʾān. British Library, OR. 1341.

### 3.2 The canon of page construction

Apart from the double illuminated page concept, one should also consider the question of the reader's comfort when reading the Qur'ân. A good manuscript design is that in which beauty is complemented by comfort. The beauty in many medieval western manuscripts is perhaps due to their secret working formula in designing the layout. This situation can also be found in the case of the Qur'ân. Different scribes or different workshops, may have different preferences in their layout design. Most likely, this layout design for the Qur'ân is determined by the size of paper available to the scribe. Also, thanks to the high degree of specialisation in craft, different areas may produce different sizes of Qur'ân. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a standard measurement in the supply of paper from paper merchants, or from paper mills. Though little is known of these standards, surviving — untrimmed! — manuscripts could well give some clues to the differences in paper measurement during the Safavid period. From the studies conducted, in terms of size, there are at least four different sizes of Qur'âns found in the Safavid period. Roughly, the measurements<sup>46</sup> for a double-page spread are:

The size 'A' Qur'ân using paper within A5 parameters (211 x 149 mm).

The size 'B' Qur'ân using paper within A4 parameters (298 x 211 mm).

The size C Qur'ân using paper within A3 parameters (422 x 298 mm).

The size D Qur'ân using paper within A2 parameters (596 x 422 mm).

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<sup>46</sup> The measurement is taken as a double page spread because of the 'pairing concept' in layout design discussed earlier. Therefore, as an example, the size of a single page is actually half of a sheet of A5 paper. It is in fact A6 size for a page.



Working within the range of measurements cited above, the scribe has to decide what kind of visual or aesthetic impact, not forgetting the dimension of comfort, is needed for the layout of his Qur'ân. For the design of any book, including the Qur'ân, one important aspect to consider is the relationship between the text area and the margin area in a given page. The correct orchestration of these two areas will result in a well-organised and harmonious design for the book. The designer must also bear in mind, in the case of a Qur'ân, the way in which it is handled. The measurements of a hand-held Qur'ân will not be the same as those of a Qur'ân designed to be supported by a *rahl*. The former is much lighter in weight, more intimate and personalised as compared to the latter. Traditional Muslims, even today, always place a standard-size<sup>47</sup> Qur'ân on a *rahl*<sup>48</sup> when reciting.<sup>49</sup> The acts of writing (which includes planning the layout) and reading are in many respects analogous.<sup>50</sup> Ergonomically, everything has to coincide perfectly between the reader, the text and the furniture. Only then can the physical, as it were external, beauty in the design of a Qur'ân be experienced to the full.

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<sup>47</sup> In the studies conducted for this thesis, standard-sized Qur'ans are those in group C, namely those of A4 size. Any Qur'ân bigger than this will need a *rahl* to support it. Ergonomically, it is not practicable for these Qur'ans to be hand-held when reciting.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 1 page 26.

<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that even a small hand held Qur'ân has to be placed on a *rahl*. Normally, the size of the Qur'ân that need a *rahl* is the range of A4 size and above. According to Tschichold, this size can be considered a big and heavy book, therefore it need a book stand (*rahl*).

<sup>50</sup> See E. Johnston in his chapter on "The physical structure of the ancient book or treatment of the pages", in *Formal Penmanship and other papers* (London, 1971), 130.

What is the fundamental code or formula behind the page layout? What materials or tools were used to execute this hidden formula? Firstly, let us look at some of the existing materials used by the scribes/illuminators displayed in many Islamic museums, or that have been published in books on Islamic art. Much knowledge of this past technology in book design has vanished. The writing materials and tools in book design that have survived are relatively scanty, especially for the medieval period. But while one could make an informed guess about the tools used during the Safavid period,<sup>51</sup> they are of little help in establishing a working procedure for the making of a manuscript. The artist might have used simple tools such as strings, sets of geometrical instruments, prepared working tablets and stamping tools<sup>52</sup> as well as stencils, and additionally, perhaps, natural measurements taken from the human body, as the most convenient way of doing things. An example is the use of thumb or fingers as a means of measurement.<sup>53</sup>

Jan Tschichold, in the course of his life-long research on the canon of medieval fine book design, uncovered significant "secrets" in 1953. He painstakingly measured the selected medieval manuscripts, and managed thereby to reconstruct the "Golden Canon of book page construction" (see Fig. 1).<sup>54</sup> His findings were

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<sup>51</sup> See Monique Vajifdar, "Materials and Techniques of Islamic Illumination and Bindings", in D. James, *Islamic Masterpieces of the Chester Beatty Library* (London, 1981), pp.44-46.

<sup>52</sup> See Sheila R. Canby in her chapter on, "Materials and Tools of the Persian Artist", in *Persian Painting* (London, 1993), 22.

<sup>53</sup> I. El-Said, *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*, edited by T. El-Bouri & K. Critchlow (Reading, 1993), 121. See S. J. Abas and A. S. Salman, *Symmetries of Islamic Geometrical Patterns* (London, 1995), 18. According to Issam El-Said, in ancient Egypt 1 *remen* = 20 fingers and 1 royal cubit = 28 fingers. See I. El-Said, "Islamic Art and Architecture", 130.

<sup>54</sup> J. Tschichold, *The Form of the Book: Essays on the Morality of Good Design*

confirmed by people like Raúl Rosarivo and J. A. van de Graaf, and correspond to graphic evidence derived from Villard de Honnecourt.<sup>55</sup> Tschichold finds that Villard's diagram (see Fig. 2) is the most rewarding confirmation of his canon. He claims that this canon is able to produce harmony in a book page irrespective of its size. Perhaps the Tschichold formula can also be extended to the study of Islamic manuscripts.

On the other hand, El Said and Parman have come out with a reconstructed working formula for the creation of Islamic patterns. They base their reconstruction on the "Root Two" system of Proportion.<sup>56</sup> This system is further confirmed by Syed Jan Abas and Amer Shaker Salmanin, in their studies on *zili*j panels in Morocco.<sup>57</sup> The examples<sup>58</sup> given by El-Said and Parman, which may be relevant for the study of layout design in the Qur'ân, do not provide a clear working formula for the layout design. In both cases the measurement stops at the edges of the framed design in the frontispiece and not at the edges of the page. If the "root two" system was indeed used, it is hard to believe that it was confined to the framed design alone and did not extend to the entire page. Perhaps the "root two" system works well only with the

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(London, 1991), pp.43-44.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. See S. Jennett, *The Making of Books* (London, 1951).

<sup>56</sup> See I. El-Said and A. Parman, *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art* (London, 1976); and I. El-Said, *Islamic Art and Architecture: The System of Geometric Design*, ed. by T. El-Bouri & K. Critchlow (Reading, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> See S. J. Abas and A. S. Salman, *Symmetries of Islamic Geometrical Patterns* (London, 1995).

<sup>58</sup> See the examples illustrated in El-Said and Parman in "*Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*", 148-151; that on p.149 is an Ilkhanid Qur'ân from Mosul while that on p.151 is a Mamlûk Qur'ân from Cairo, both in the British Library.



frontispiece of the Qur'âns in question but not with the text area in the rest of these Qur'âns. Furthermore, while this system works with the geometric patterns within the frontispiece, it does not work in the layout design.

As stated earlier, there seems to be some parallelism in the layout formula between Islamic manuscripts and the medieval manuscript canon that was discovered by Jan Tschichold. Close examination of Safavid Qur'âns shows that, perhaps at the initial stage, similar working formulae were employed, but progressively some changes took place which differentiated them from western medieval manuscripts. These differences may be due to the nature of handling the Qur'ân, especially Qur'âns of group C and group D size. They are too big and uncomfortable to be held in the hand for a long time. Group C and D Qur'âns are *rahl* Qur'âns, and this directly affects the internal layout, involving a slight modification in Tschichold's Golden Canon formula. The text area in the Qur'ân is always brought closer to the bottom side of the Qur'ân. This directly affects the measurement of the tail margin. The tail margin turns out to be slightly smaller than the head margin. The measurement is taken from the bottom line of the text area to the bottom edge of the Qur'ân. Nevertheless, the overall balance in the design is maintained either by the illuminated areas surrounding the text, or by the outer single fine black line surrounding the overall text as well as the decorated areas of the page. Usually, the measurement from this outer single fine black line at the head margin, fore-edge margin and the tail margin, is of equal width. Similarly at the opposite page, where the margin, roughly measured, is about 20 mm all round. This indirectly acts as a controlling device in balancing the layout design, even though, internally, there is discord in the placement of the text. In cases where no black outline was given for the text block, another type of device was used. In this case, the artist used the decorated illuminated margin surrounding the text to create balance and harmony in the layout. If these Qur'âns

were to be placed upright, the text area would definitely look bottom-heavy.<sup>59</sup> But, since these Qur'âns are meant to be placed on a *rahl*, whereby the open double page is always facing upward, the whole concept of design works according to the comfort of its reader.<sup>60</sup> As stated by Jennett:

"Good margins are of importance in the design of a book and should be arranged with care, and as soon as possible in the course of book production. They contribute largely to the comfort and pleasure of reading, giving ease to the eye and dignity to the book."<sup>61</sup>

According to Tschichold, a good proportion for the page as a whole, width : length, is in the ratio of 2:3. The text area and the page will also show the same proportion that is, the height of the text area will be equal to the width of the page. The margin proportion will be 2:3:4:6 (tail margin : head margin : fore-edge margin : tail margin) (see Fig. 1). But, in the case of the Qur'ân, there is a slight difference concerning the text area. What used to be the text area in a typical western medieval manuscript may not necessarily be the text area for Safavid Qur'âns. In Safavid Qur'âns, the section prior to *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning part of *Sûrah* 2, is normally full of decoration and within its frame. This can also be defined as a decorated margin. But, these decorated margins (head margin, fore-edge margin and tail margin) were preceded in earlier centuries by are non-decorated margins. Therefore, one can say that the text area of the many medieval Qur'âns is placed in a way that corresponds to the western concept of text area: in other words, a frame within a frame layout is

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<sup>59</sup> See R. Arnheim, *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts* (London, 1982).

<sup>60</sup> See the Chapter 3 on layout for a discussion of comfort in the context of ergonomic design.

<sup>61</sup> Jennett, *Making*, 341. See K. F. H. Murrell, *Ergonomics: Man in His Working Environment* (London, 1965).

adopted, and in this formula the tail margin is the largest. The plain margins in earlier medieval Qur'âns are more or less equal, in the ratio of 2:2:2:2 (inner margin : head margin : fore-edge margin : tail margin). In Safavid Qur'âns, if the measurement is taken from the text area inclusive of the decorated margins, the proportion of the margins to each other will then be in the ratio of 2:6:6:3 (see Fig. 3). Other than in these decorated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and *Sûrah* 2, this system of margin proportion is not to be found in the subsequent and undecorated pages of the same Qur'âns. In most instances, the head margin and the fore-edge margin are made bigger than in these two decorated *sûrah* pages. In other words, the opening double-page spread found in so many Safavid Qur'âns, with its splendid illuminations, adopts a different system of proportion from that used in the less richly illuminated pages of these same Qur'âns. The middle and closing pages echo those at the beginning. Perhaps, as shown in Fig. 7, the page and text proportion illustrated by Tschichold for western manuscripts operates the other way round in the case of the Qur'ân.

Group A and group B Qur'âns, on the other hand, can be considered as hand-held Qur'âns. These Qur'âns are small, thin and very light. There is no need for a *rahl* to support them. Therefore, the optical concept described above is less likely to be found in these Qur'âns. Basically, in these smaller Qur'âns the artist adopted a layout involving margins of equal size,<sup>62</sup> probably because of their small size and the viewing angle when reading. Equal margins in many ways help in the balancing of the design. There is less need for a bigger tail margin or head margin in this type of Qur'ân.

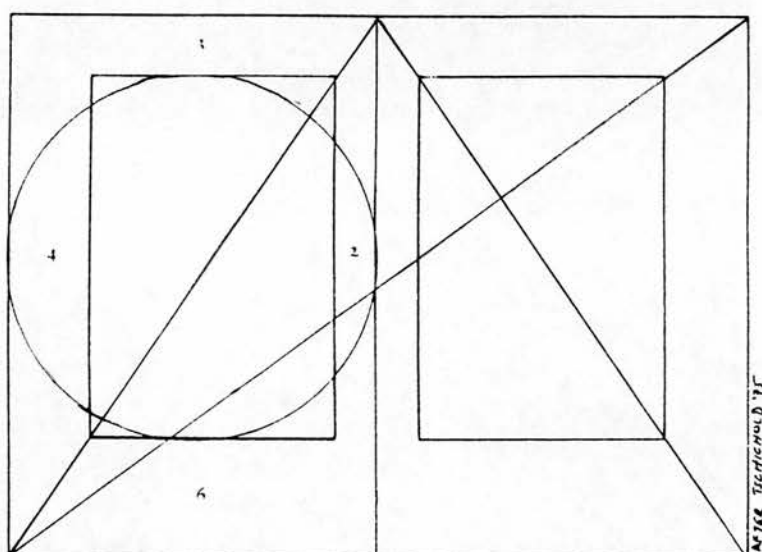
One significant setback to the process of research in the measurement of these Qur'ans is the cropped margin. There is no way of telling the exact original size of a

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<sup>62</sup> This measurement can also be found in modern printed Qur'âns, from Saudi Arabia. These Qur'ans are intended to be hand-held.

Qur'ân with a cropped margin. Rough estimates can be made but they will not yield an accurate answer. Such cropping was sometimes done in the process of conservation in modern times, or in the recent past when frequent use of a Qur'ân had destroyed the edges of the pages as well as the covers. Over a period of time, moreover, some Qur'ân covers would need replacement. Since specialisation is a key factor, the easy availability of ready-made Qur'ân covers might be the reason for cropping to take place. The desire to get the right match, or to get the nearest size possible for an unbound Qur'ân, would explain how the trimming of decorated pages might take place. The most adversely affected areas are usually in the full decorated or illuminated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and *Sûrah* 2. After all, these decorated areas in the Qur'ân may be considered as less important; so long as the actual text is intact, the rest is immaterial. Of course, such a point of view would be unacceptable to the artist, but usually such things happened after his time. One can also imagine completed Qur'âns shelved unbounded for a period of time, awaiting decoration or illumination.

# THE FORM OF THE BOOK



The canon upon which many late medieval manuscripts and incunabula are based. Determined by Jan Tschichold, 1953. Page proportion 2:3.

Text area and page show the same proportions.

Height of text area equals page width.

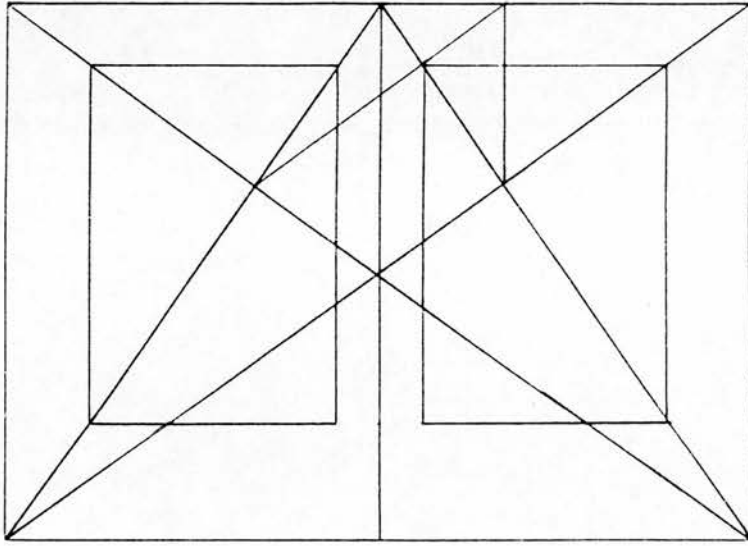
Margin proportions 2:3:4:6.

(After Tschichold).

Fig. 1. The form of the book (After Tschichold).



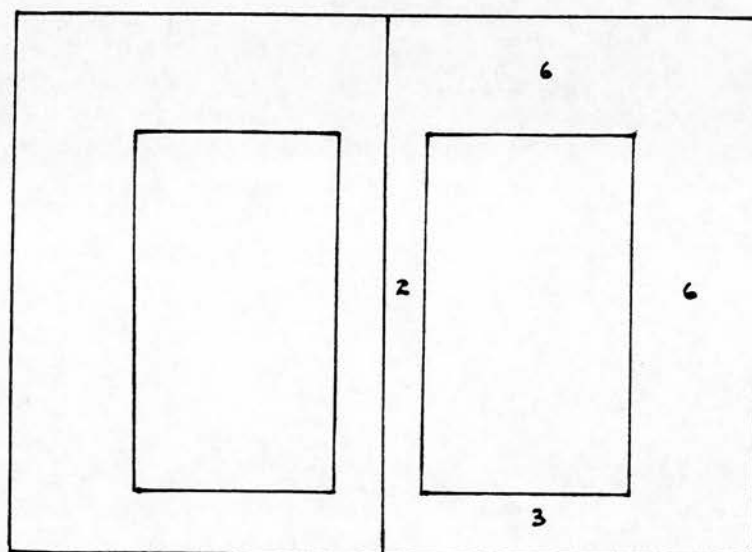
# THE FORM OF THE BOOK



Villard's Diagram. This is a canon of harmonious division named after its inventor, Villard de Home-court, an architect who lived and worked during the first half of the 13th century in Picardy region of Northern France. His manuscript *Bauhüttenbuch* (workshop record book) is held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Using Villard's canon, shown in bold, it is possible to divide a straight line into any number of equal parts without need for a measuring stick. (After Tschichold).

Fig. 2. The form of the book (After Tschichold).

## THE FORM OF THE QUR'ÂN



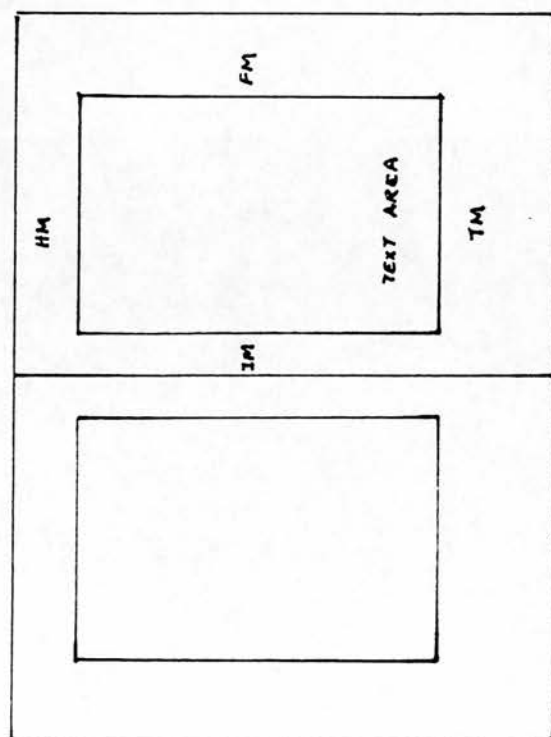
The common proportions for a Safavid Qur'ân are 2:6:6:3  
(inner margin : head margin : fore-edge margin : tail margin).

The text area inclines slightly towards the tail margin.

The head margin is bigger than the tail margin.

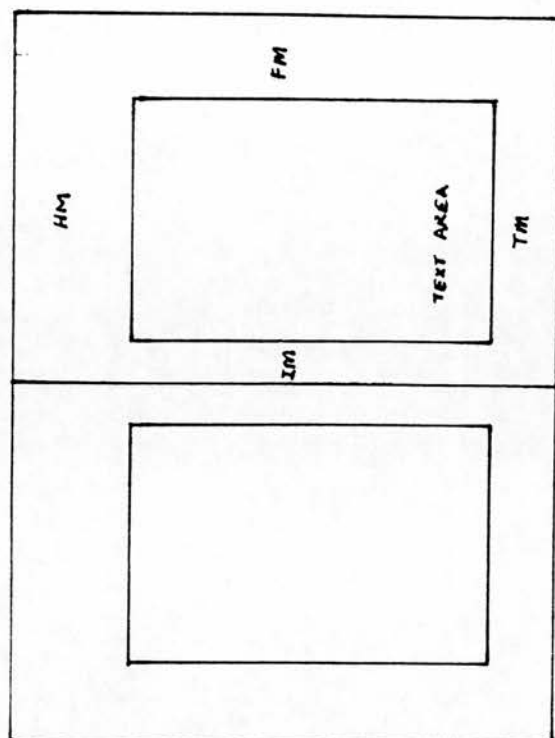
Fig. 3. The form of the Qur'ân.

# THE FORM OF THE BOOK



Margin proportions of 2 : 3 : 4 : 6 based on Jan Tschichold's diagram.

# THE FORM OF THE QUR'ÂN



Margin proportions based on Jan Tschichold but presented upside-down. The head margin is bigger than the tail margin. The fore-edge margin is more or less the same width as the head margin (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 4. The forms of the book and the Qur'ân.

### 3.3 The arrangement of the page

In the arrangement of the pages in the Qur'ân, the scribe may have used a system whereby every single sheet of paper yields four blank pages (verso and recto). This single sheet of paper is folded into two, so as to get equal areas of blank space and a centre line marked for the spine.<sup>63</sup> This paper is then mounted on a piece of writing board which is big enough to enable the artist to work in comfort.<sup>64</sup> There are no page numbers such as are usually found in western medieval manuscripts.<sup>65</sup> Each page in the Qur'ân is normally marked with the last word from the previous page. This word can be found at the corner of the head or tail margin of the page (Pl. 11).<sup>66</sup> Presumably the copying of the text would be undertaken by a single scribe who fully in control of the whole process. He might copying the text on single sheets one after another. He might of course copy a Qur'ân from start to finish and then begin on the next one. Or, perhaps to save time and improve the result, he might write the same verses twice — or several times - in the manner of a conveyor belt. This would result in a high degree of consistency in copying the Qur'ân and would enable the

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<sup>63</sup> In the course of my research in the Chester Beatty Library, I had the opportunity of examining a portion of a 16th-century Qur'ân that was in the process of restoration and binding. In this case the illuminated pages were actually part of a single piece of paper that was folded. Therefore this single piece of paper yields four pages altogether.

<sup>64</sup> Practically, the Qur'ân is of a standard size and easy to work with, especially when the support for the writing board is from the scribe/illuminator's lap. Any bigger size will definitely be unpractical and an obstacle to the production of a fine work of art. Perhaps some special tools are needed for bigger size Qur'ân.

<sup>65</sup> To the Muslims, for purpose of reference in the Qur'ân, only the name of the *sûrah* and the *âyah* is quoted, for example *sûrah* 2:141-3. There is no page number for references to be made. To speed up the search for a particular *âyah* in a *sûrah*, marginal signs such as *rub*<sup>c</sup>, *hizb* and *nisf* are used as a guide in the Qur'ân.

<sup>66</sup> CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no.158).

calligrapher to meet the demand for the number of Qur'âns ordered by his clients. When these verses were repeatedly copied, it would become something of an automatic task for the scribe. Of course, this is still a slow process, but it would minimise casual error, though the utmost care would be needed to make sure that everything was in the correct order. Illumination was added soon after the text was finished, either by the scribe himself or by an expert in illumination.<sup>67</sup> In some instances, it might have been added at a much later stage. Another factor to bear in mind is that the illumination can be added either before or after binding. There are in fact certain indications which suggest that illumination or decoration was added after binding. One example is when the outer frame of the decorated areas does not correspond to the following page especially at the inner margin or at the spine of a bound Qur'ân.<sup>68</sup> Another example is given by the practice of breaking the vertical line which borders the text block to accommodate a word which projects slightly from the main block.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> James, *QB*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Khalili, *QUR60*, folios 2b-3a. See James, *AT*, pl.40.

<sup>69</sup> Khalili, *QUR231*, folios 2b-3a. See James, *AT*, pl.46.





Pl. 11. A 16th-century Qur'ân. CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).

### 3.4 The design technique

According to Kühnel, the system of dividing pages into different types of illumination was invented in the town of Tabrîz.<sup>70</sup> The standard practice is that at least four areas in the Qur'ân were decorated or illuminated. They are in *Sûrah* 1, the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 and *Sûrah* 18 (*al-Kahfî*), and the closing *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân (Pl. 12a, 12b and 12c).<sup>71</sup> All of these have different types of layout. Furthermore, all these main areas of illumination are again very different from the rest of the unilluminated or less illuminated pages in the Qur'ân. One element that seems constant; is however, the positioning of the text on the page. The text is always placed nearer to the tail margin and towards the centre of the double page format.<sup>72</sup> The areas allocated for the text are symmetrically balanced, strong and stable. This system seems to adhere to the basic principles listed by Qâdî Ahmad and Bâbâ Shâh.

Close examination reveals the presence of lines to guide the writing of the text. Several possibilities as to the method used for making these lines can be identified. They could be made by a special instrument and technique such as a ruled wooden board,<sup>73</sup> stamping, stencils or the pouncing technique.<sup>74</sup> The technique using a wooden board is that of pressing a sheet of paper onto the board, whose lines are in relief, to get an impression of those lines onto the paper so that they act as a guide for

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<sup>70</sup> Kühnel, *Minor*, 26.

<sup>71</sup> CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no.153).

<sup>72</sup> See Chapter 3, Ill. 1, p.146.

<sup>73</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, 43.

<sup>74</sup> See Ettinghausen, *"Original and Conformity in Islamic Art"*, 90.



writing the text. Another technique might be by drawing all these lines with a blunt needle on the paper. This technique will not require the lines to be erased after everything is finished. When all the text has been written in its allocated area or columns, marginal signs were added at the appropriate places. In other words, the writing comes first and is not controlled by the design. Marginal signs such as *khamsah*, *‘ashara*, *ruku‘*, *hizb* and *sajdah* were usually written or marked next to the text.<sup>75</sup> These marginal signs are probably written on imaginary lines extended from the text, or perhaps by the use of a '*masṭarh*' (ruler). When all the required marginal signs are in place, their decoration or illumination can be added. There are also indications that these marginal signs were written last. This can be seen by using a magnifying glass to reveal the different layers of painted areas. The marginal medallions were painted first, followed by the written signs. The places for marginal signs were perhaps already earmarked. Furthermore, in most cases, the written marginal sign is in a different style of script as compared to the text.

Stencilling or stamping techniques may also have been used in the decoration of the Qur’ān. Close examination of the marginal medallions shows the existence of some hidden structural lines. The colour of these lines is light brown. The initial colour was probably black but over a period of time this colour changed. The presence of these hidden lines suggests that some special tools were used prior to painting, whether a stencils or stamps or simple geometrical instruments. In areas where hidden lines are not visible, a pre-designed tablet or block was placed underneath the paper and an impression of the structural design was taken. This impression will be visible at the time of the painting of the marginal medallion but probably disappeared over a period of time. Perhaps, in the process of binding, when

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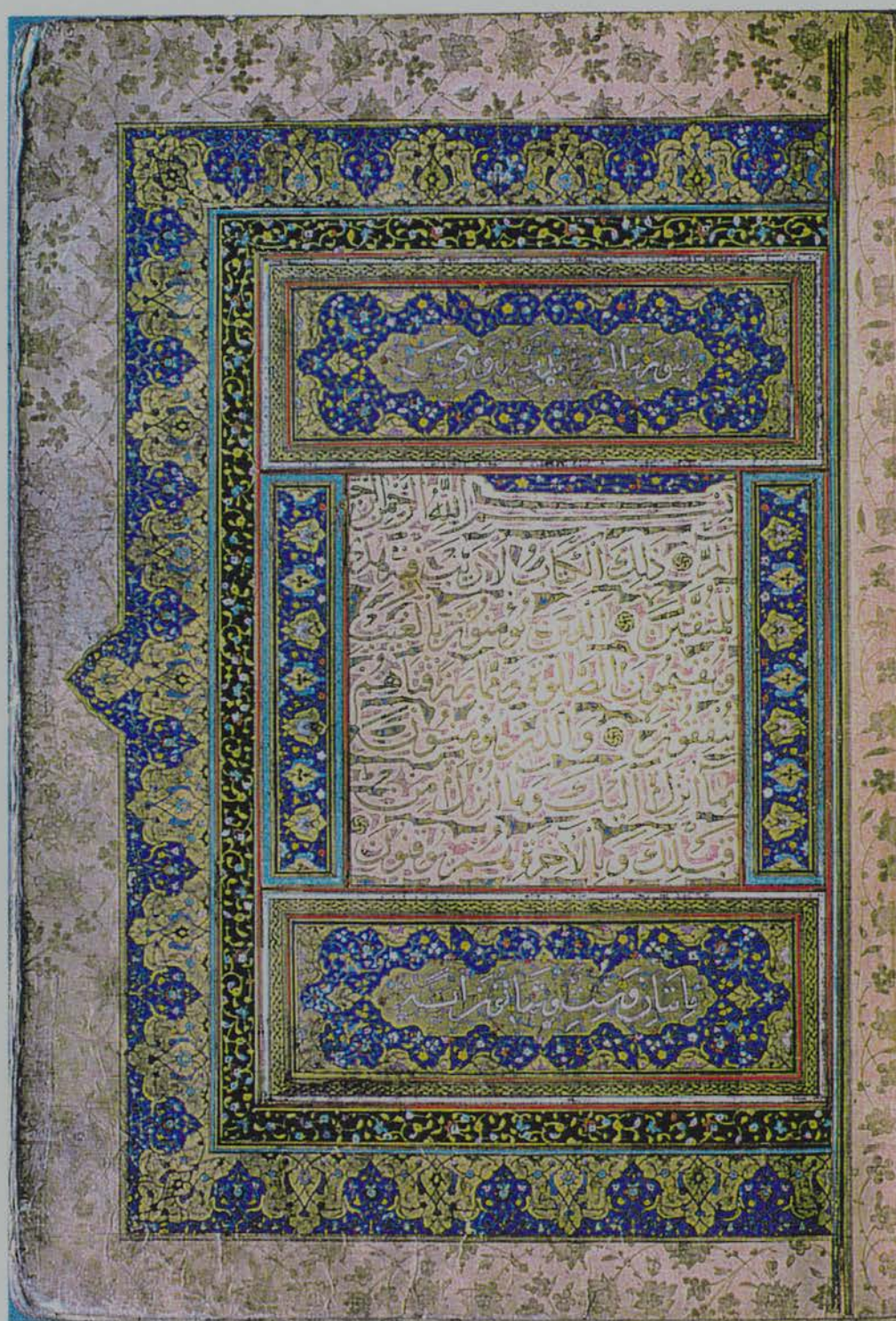
<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 5.

all the pages were tightly pressed for trimming, indented marks disappeared. But some kind of tool was required to enable the artist to draw a perfect circle. If special blocks or stamping tools were used for the decoration of the covers, perhaps the same basic type of instrument was also used in the decoration of marginal design.<sup>76</sup>

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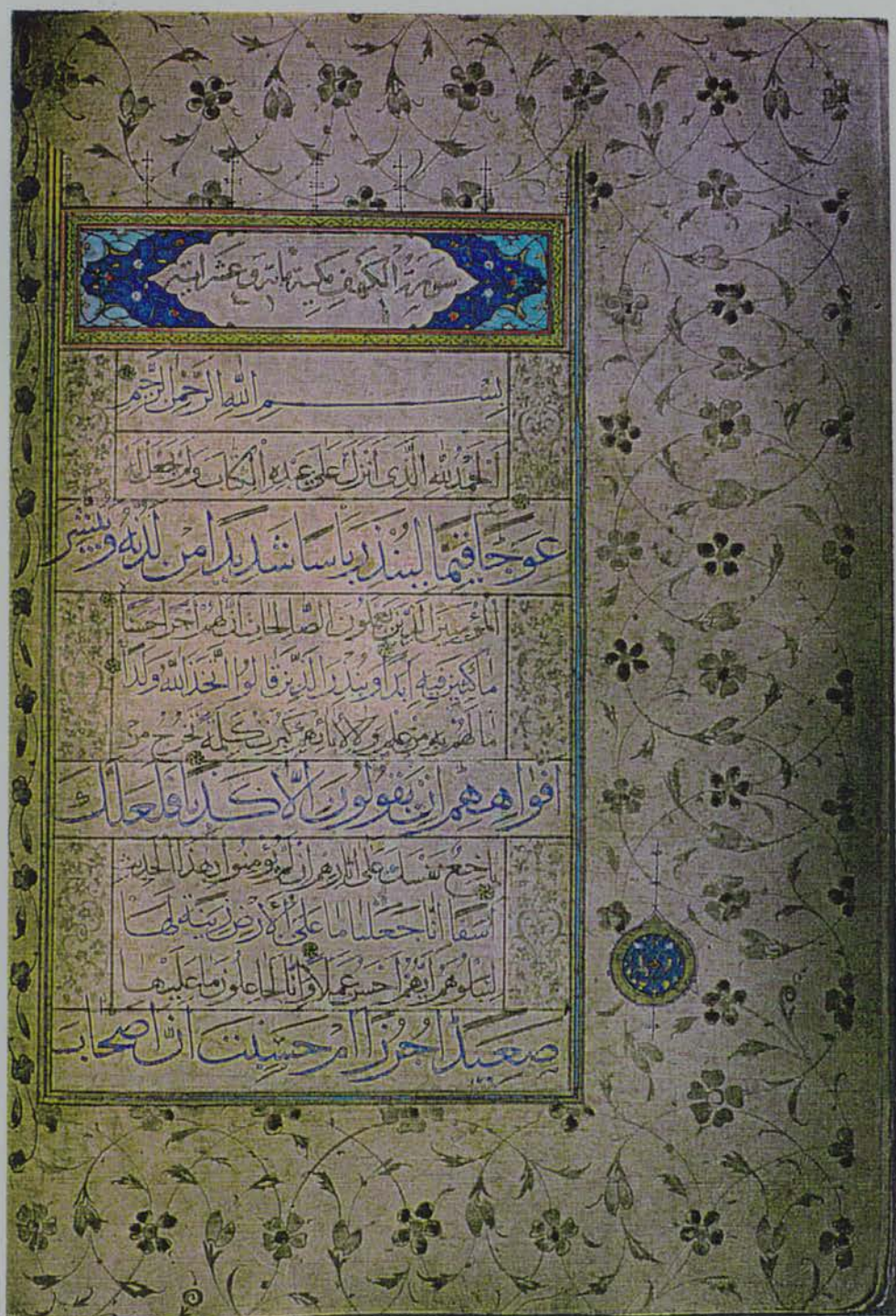
<sup>76</sup> *Op. cit.*, 90.





Pl. 12a. Qur'ân, dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).





Pl. 12b. Qur'ân, dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).





Pl. 12c Qur'ân, dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).

### 3.5 Ergonomics aspects of art

"The scribes when they trimmed the *qalam*  
Used to rub its back with earth.  
Try out the *qalam* with a dot.  
Listen to this word of an ancient man:  
If from the *qalam* a dot comes out regular,  
You can achieve beautiful writing with it."<sup>77</sup>

The above quotation indirectly illustrates the relationship between the preparation of the tool (*qalam*) and the art (writing). These are two of the criteria for beautiful writing. A correct tool may do the correct job and is itself subject to the comfort of the artist when using the tool. In other words, all this has to do with the relationship between ergonomics and art, which is a crucial factor to the artist.

The science of ergonomics can be seen at work in the sitting position, which itself can be seen as a tool or a piece of 'furniture' for the production of an illuminated Qur'ân. Perhaps the artist's leg functioned both as an easel as a resting place for the writing arm. The right leg corresponds to the right arm, see Fig. 5 (a,<sup>78</sup> b,<sup>79</sup> c,<sup>80</sup> d<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.115-116.

<sup>78</sup> A calligrapher at work. From a 16th-century Turkish manuscript of *ʿAjâ'ib al-Makhlûqât* (The Wonder of Creation) by al-Qazwîni. See Y. H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Boulder, 1978), pl.23.

<sup>79</sup> Artist at work. From an Indian Moghul manuscript, *Akhlâq-i Nâsirî* (The Ethics of Nasîr al-Dîn Tûsî). Illustrated by Sanju for the Emperor Akbar, ca. 1595 AD. Ibid., pl.99.

<sup>80</sup> From an illustrated anthology of Persian poems dated 978/1570-1. Ibid., pl.102.

<sup>81</sup> Portrait of Shah Abu'l-Ma'ali by Dust Muhammad. See S .C. Welch in his chapter on 'The Arts of the Book', in *Treasure of Islam* (New Jercey, 1985), pl.118.



and e<sup>82</sup>). For the Persian artist, this working position is culturally natural and is the most relaxed position in which to execute any work of art. The distance between the working page on the painting board and the eye is, perhaps, in the range between six to twelve inches. Perhaps this rather intimate working position was determined by the environment and the availability of light. It gave the artist maximum control of his work. Evidence shows that the execution of this fine and detailed work seems effortless.<sup>83</sup> All that move is the skilled fingers holding the reed or pen, and sliding swiftly on the already polished paper. Only two fingers hold the reed while the smallest finger, which rests on the surface of the paper, acts as a support. The other hand will hold both the paper board and a small container of paint (see Fig. 5, e). All the muscles in the body are in a relaxed but controlled position. Furthermore, the positioning of the body is actually functioning like a time machine. There is a limit to that kind of sitting position before the whole body starts to diminish its support for concentration. Therefore, an equal amount of concentration will be given to the painting at any particular time. Additionally, the paper itself is normally placed on a painting board of comfortable size and of a light material. The pen is made of reed and is by its very nature very light as well as comfortable to the hand. Perhaps because of an intuitive understanding of nature, the nib of the reed pen is always at the lower part of the reed. In terms of weight, the lower part of the reed is much heavier and stronger than the upper part.<sup>84</sup> Thus it creates less fatigue while working. According to Mu<sup>c</sup>izz ibn Bâdîs (ca. 1025 A.D.), "the lighter in weight, the more artful the

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<sup>82</sup> From a Reza i-Abbâsi drawing, signed by Mu'in i-Musavir, Isfahan dated 1087/1673. See Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl.45.

<sup>83</sup> See R. Fry, 'Some Aspects of Persian Art' in *An Illustrated Souvenir of the Exhibition of Persian Art at Burlington House London* (London, 1931), xix.

<sup>84</sup> See Levey, *Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arabic Bookmaking*, p.14.

pen".<sup>85</sup> Even the very design of the clothing worn by the scribe looks relaxed and comfortable. Altogether, then, the 'cognitive', 'affective' and 'psychomotor' aspects are used at their maximum in the production of the manuscript. According to al-Nazzâm, the scribe prepares himself spiritually, mentally and physically for his task.<sup>86</sup>

The studio workshop of the Persian artist is perhaps not the same as the western workshop. The production of the manuscript lingers around the man himself. There are not many sophisticated kinds of furniture as in western studios. The artist works with simple tools which can easily be packed into portable boxes or bags. The pen or the *qalam* is of two kinds. According to Qâdî Ahmad, one is from plant while the other is from animal. The former is the reed pen, while the latter is the brush made of animal hair. The reed<sup>87</sup> is sharpened<sup>88</sup> to function as a nib and to contain the right amount of ink, whereas the brushes are made of the hairs from a squirrel's tail<sup>89</sup> and of Persian cats.<sup>90</sup> The length of this reed pen and of the brush has to be proportionate,<sup>91</sup> that is about a hand's width.<sup>92</sup> They probably measured about 18 to

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>86</sup> al-Nadim-Dodge, *Fihrist*, 20.

<sup>87</sup> According to Qâdî Ahmad, the reed must be ruddy coloured, not too hard and not too soft. Also it has to be at the right length and thickness comfortable to the hand. See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>89</sup> Levey, "Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arab Bookmaking", p.39.

<sup>90</sup> S. R. Canby, *Persian Painting* (London, 1993), 19.

<sup>91</sup> See Levey, "Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arab Bookmaking", 14.

<sup>92</sup> J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*, tr. G. French, ed. R. Hillenbrand (Princeton, 1984), 69.

19 cm. to fit into a pencase.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes there is a built-in inkwell in the pencase<sup>94</sup> and in other instances they are separated.<sup>95</sup> The inkwell must be of a round shape in order to maintain the colour of the ink and to avoid foul odour.<sup>96</sup> As for the colours, they are either kept in a separate compartment in a pencase-like box, or they are prepared in a separate container.<sup>97</sup> There are also polished agate stones or shells<sup>98</sup> for polishing the paper or for polishing the areas immediately after painting. These instruments can be in any form and are very personalised items. Perhaps, different artists or craftsmen had different tools, ergonomically designed. The recipes for colours and ink were probably also personal ones. For example, as stated by Qâdî Ahmad that, Abul-Ma<sup>c</sup>sûm-Mîzâ was known for his expertise in dissolving lapis lazuli.<sup>99</sup> Raw materials were bought and personally mixed,<sup>100</sup> probably there were no ready-made colours or tools as are normally to be found today.

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<sup>93</sup> See R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London, 1993), pl.69; and A. Khatibi and M. Sijelmassi, *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy*, revised and expanded ed. (London, 1995), 74.

<sup>94</sup> Pedersen, *Arabic*, p.70. See Safadi, *IC*, pl.93.

<sup>95</sup> See Pedersen, *Arabic*, pl.29.

<sup>96</sup> See Levey, "Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arab Bookmaking", p.15.

<sup>97</sup> See Canby, *Persian*, p.16, pl.6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>99</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 190.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.195-201.

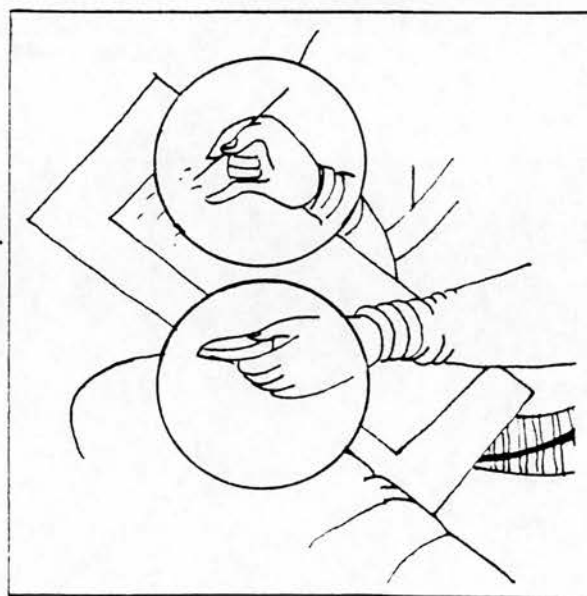


Fig. 5a. A calligrapher at work. 16th-century Turkish manuscript of *ʿAja'ib al-Makhlûqât* (The Wonder of Creation) by al-Qazwini. Y. H. Safadi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pl.23.

Fig. 5b. From Moghul manuscript, *Akhlâq-i Nâsirî* (The Ethics of Nasir al-Din Tusi). Illustrated by Sanju for Emperor Akbar, ca. 1595. Ibid., pl.99.

Fig. 5c. From an illustrated anthology of Persian poems dated 978-9/1570-1. Ibid., pl.102.

Fig. 5d. Portrait of Shâh Abu'l-Ma'ali by Dust Muhammad. S. C. Welch, *Treasure of Islam*, pl.118.

Fig. 5e. From a Reza i-Abbâsi drawing, signed by Mu'in i-Musavir, Isfâhân, dated 1087/1673. A. Soudavar, *Art of the Persian Courts*, pl.45.



#### 4. The canon in colouring<sup>101</sup>

"Colour also produces beauty. For every bright colour, such as purple, purpure, vegetable-green, rose, sa<sup>c</sup>wî-red, and the like, appeal to the beholder and please the eye. Similarly, dyed clothes and covers and utensils, also flowers, blossoms and meadows, are felt to be beautiful. Therefore colour by itself produces beauty."<sup>102</sup>

Apart from harmonious compositional structure, the artists also knew that another form of language is colour itself.<sup>103</sup> Beautiful works are produced even with limited colour hues. They knew the power of colours and its potential. In their application of colours, the same principle of 'harmonious totality'<sup>104</sup> in a composition can be seen. Colours were intelligently used to depict this concept of 'perfect balance',<sup>105</sup> simply by consistent application of the three basic or primary colours in their composition. The anchor colours comprise yellow, blue and red. As stated by Martin Lings:

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<sup>101</sup> See M. Levey's translation on the manuscript of Mu<sup>c</sup>izz ibn Bâdîs, "*Umdat al-Kuttâb wa'uddat dhawi al-albâb* (Book of the Staff of the Scribes and Implements of the Discerning with a Description of the Line, the Pens, Soot Inks, Lîq, Gall Inks, Dyeing and Details of Bookbinding)", in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* Vol. 52/4 (1962), pp.5-55; and Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.195-201.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn al-Haytham, *The Optics of Ibn al-Haytham: Books I-III, on Direct Vision*, tr. A. I. Sabra (London, 1989), 200.

<sup>103</sup> E. L. Eastman, "Safavid Carpets: Colour Juxtapositions with Illuminations," *A Survey of Persian Art: From Prehistoric Times to the Present*, Vol. 14 (1981), 3157.

<sup>104</sup> M. Lings, *Symbol & Archetype: A Study of the Meaning of Existence* (Cambridge, 1991), 29.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

"Take away red, and the perfect balance would be broken in the direction of too much cold; the absence of blue would make for excessive heat, without yellow, the residue would be too ponderous."<sup>106</sup>

Persian artists are brave in their use of colour language. They have the ability to integrate all the different disciplines of knowledge in colour to produce a successful harmonious composition. Whether it is from the artist's perception of colours or that of the physicist, chemist, physiologist or even psychologist,<sup>107</sup> they are all presented in one composition. This results in endless ranges of colour potential, from simple primary colours to secondary and tertiary colours, and even — at a much more advanced stage — discordant colours,<sup>108</sup> and complementary and contrasting colours. All can be found in one composition.<sup>109</sup> Whatever groups these colours came from, they are carefully studied and placed. The arrangement of these colours is well balanced and structured, suggesting perhaps a hidden formula in their composition. This hidden formula is perhaps related to the concept of perfect balance in the whole composition, both in the hidden structure of the composition and in the distribution of colours. Everything, every corner of the picture plane, is thought out. Nothing is accidental, or reflects uncertainty on the part of the artist.

Basically, these colours are of two different types: mineral and vegetable.<sup>110</sup> Mineral colours are normally opaque, whereas vegetable colours are transparent. In

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Eastman, "*Safavid Carpets: Colour Juxtapositions with Illuminations*", 3156. See Levey, "*Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arab Bookmaking*", pp.7-10.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 3157.

<sup>109</sup> Helen Varley has given a comprehensive explanation on the theory of colour and its relationship to perception; see her book *Colour* (London, 1988).

<sup>110</sup> See H. T. Behzad in his chapter 'The Preparation of the Miniaturist's Materials', in

the preparation of these colours, any one of several binding media is used, such as water, albumen,<sup>111</sup> glue and gum Arabic.<sup>112</sup> Laurie ruled out the use of gum Arabic in Persian miniature painting<sup>113</sup> but, in Qâdî Ahmad's treatise, it is stated that a few drops of gum Arabic should be added in order not to lose the quality of the colour.<sup>114</sup> Different artists or workshops may have had different colour recipes and these may have been kept secret. The mixing of colours to produce a different tone or hue can either be done on the picture itself, or on the artist's palette. In the former case, which involves in most cases transparent colours, only vegetable media were suitable. For example, "a yellow vegetable dye wash over blue results in green".<sup>115</sup> The opaque characteristics of mineral colours required them to be mixed on the palette first before being applying to the picture plane. Whatever the approach, both methods required an overlapping technique of colours to achieve the desired tone. A lighter tone might need less colour pigment and more binding agent to dilute it. In the case of a heavy tone, the process is the opposite. Sometimes a special gum is added in the mixing of the colour to retain a certain tone.<sup>116</sup> All these colours are prepared before being applying to the picture.<sup>117</sup> In fact, a glimpse of this process can be seen in Qâdî Ahmad's treatise:

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"A Survey of Persian Art" Vol. 5. (1981), pp.1921-1922; and Levey, "Chemical Technology in Mediaeval Arab Bookmaking", pp.7-10.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 1921.

<sup>112</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.196-198.

<sup>113</sup> A. P. Laurie, "The Pigments and Medium", in A.U.Pope, *Survey*, 1920.

<sup>114</sup> *Op. cit.*, 196.

<sup>115</sup> Behzad, "Preparation of Miniaturist's Material", 1921.

<sup>116</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.196-198.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

"Cast the lapis lazuli into a vessel with one or two drops of gum upon it and prepare a paste (*khamîr*, "dough"). Then drop by drop pour water over it and grind it. Should it be thick, add a few drops of water; should it lose color, add a couple of drops of gum. After that, as they say, adding gum to color is a fault and is not good, except for red color which requires more (gum)."<sup>118</sup>

Even though there is no contemporary detail or scientific recipe available for the mixing of these colours, to an artist such information is perhaps enough to open up avenues for further experimentation with colour. On the other hand, the preceding discussion reflects the need for a thorough understanding of colours and compositional structure before executing any work of art.<sup>119</sup> The artist cannot afford to make any mistake because art materials such as paper, ink, colours and brushes are expensive. Everything is man-made and in most cases personalised or specially ordered. Furthermore, Qâdî Ahmad's treatise also suggests the many man hours involved in the preparation of a single colour or a desired tone. In fact, even after the application of the colour to the picture, certain colours, such as gold, need polishing to arrive at a certain level of shine or lustre. According to Taherzade Behzad, the lustre of gold can only be achieved by thoroughly polishing the gold with jasper or carnelian.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, the preparation of dull gold is achieved by covering it "with a sheet of sheer paper before it is burnished with a jasper or carnelian polisher".<sup>121</sup> As for tinted gold, especially greenish gold, an intermixture of silver was added to give that greenish tint.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Ettinghausen, "Originality and Conformity in Islamic Art", 87. See F. Rosenthal, 'On Art and Aesthetics in Graeco-Arabic Wisdom Literature' in his *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam: The L. A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology*, ed. R. Ettinghausen and O. Kurz, Vol. 2 (Leiden, 1971), pp.1-19.

<sup>120</sup> Behzad, "Preparation of the Miniaturist's Materials", 1922.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*



According to Bahnassi, "in Islamic art, colour replaces light; that is why it is transparent and brilliant".<sup>123</sup> Close observation shows that there are certain colouring techniques consistently used by Safavid artists. Their thorough understanding of and sensitivity to the properties of colours may indirectly have helped them to develop special techniques for the distribution of colours in a painting. These techniques include the transparent technique, the opaque technique and a combination of both. In the application of colour, the artist used either a 'painterly technique' or a 'linear technique' of painting. The favoured colouring technique used was the 'linear technique' rather than the 'painterly technique'. In the former, the two painted areas are clearly defined. This can be either by means of two different areas of colour, or by having a black line in between to separate the two areas. For example, there is a clear-cut separation of a blue painted area from a yellow painted area. There are no overlapping colours between these two areas. The "painterly technique" is different. Here, overlapping colours are possible. They are allowed within the area in question by means of transparent water-based vegetable colours. Furthermore, there is less accidental colour mixture in the picture. If any area of overlapping colours occurs, it is simply a reflection of less skill. Normally, such defects are camouflaged by the sheer size and intricacy of the designs, and are only visible by means of a magnifying glass. In fact, the decoration or illumination of a Qur'ân is 'pattern work', whereby every single area is individually coloured. Everything is well defined and there are no grey

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Bahnassi, "*The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art*," 86. See N. Ardalan and L. Baktiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (London, 1979), pp.48-55.

areas. As James said, an excellent piece of work reflects total perfection and precision.<sup>124</sup>

The 'richness' of the design can best be identified by the extensive use of blue and gold in the composition. These colours seem to have been regarded as the most beautiful, and had higher status than other colours. The blue is usually the blue of lapis lazuli which is dark and brilliant. Visually, both blue and gold, when placed side by side, enhance each other in terms of richness and brightness. Both are background colours for a composition within a composition. The blue can be a background for the gold area as well as for other arabesque designs. At the same time, the gold, in its own area, is also the background for its own arabesque design. Since blue is darker than gold, gold is a stronger colour and attracts the most attention. John Gage, like Ibn Haytham, claims that lighter colours are the strongest.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, the interplay of both these colours as background colours was controlled by other colours and by the structural design of the composition. It seems that colours and design are in equilibrium.

Colours also carry certain cultural and religious meanings. According to the Arabs, "yellow is the colour of burning sun and desert, the colour of limitless space".<sup>126</sup> Perhaps for this reason, no matter how complicated or complex the design is, whether big or small, the presence of yellow or gold helps to give some breathing space to the whole design. Yellow or gold is also said to be the colour of

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<sup>124</sup> James, *QB*, 8.

<sup>125</sup> J. Gage, *Colour and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (London, 1993), 64.

<sup>126</sup> Bahnassi, "*The Spiritual Philosophy of Art*," 86.

manifestation<sup>127</sup> and wisdom.<sup>128</sup> Yellow is a light colour, but gold is a light-generating colour. Both manifest the concept of light, and when they are placed side by side, automatically becomes the focal point. An example of this is a yellow flower with a gold area in the middle or gold surroundings. But this focal point may be balanced by white flowers in the composition; white is also a light colour. Yellow and blue can also be said as celestial colours that symbolises peace and tranquillity as well as paradise.<sup>129</sup> These two colours are dominant colours used in a Qur'ân manuscripts (see Pl. 13).<sup>130</sup> Perhaps it is the coldness of blue that helps to control the vibrant warm yellow within. Yellow set against a blue background creates a complementary colour effect.

"Together, the two hues have strange properties: two lights of complementary colours - blue and yellow for example - if mixed together will produce white light. Yellow and blue pigments together reflect the three additive primaries of light. The yellow pigment reflects yellow and red wavelengths of light; the blue pigment reflects mostly blue wavelengths. In terms of combined reflected light, then, these two colours reflect the full complement of spectral hues."<sup>131</sup>

Furthermore, psychologically, in terms of weight, blue is much heavier than yellow. There seems to be a certain distance created between these colours, but this is balanced or reduced by having small areas of black within the gold area. Thus visually blue and gold are kept at an almost equal distance. Similarly ingenious visual tricks or

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<sup>127</sup> Lings, *Symbol*, 41.

<sup>128</sup> D. Fontana, *The Secret Language of Symbols: A Visual Key to Symbols and Their Meanings* (London, 1993), 119.

<sup>129</sup> Bahnassi, "The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art", 86. See also Fontana, *Secret*, pp.66-67 and pp.118-119.

<sup>130</sup> CBL. Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

<sup>131</sup> H. Varley, ed., *Colour* (London, 1988), 236.

techniques can also be found in the manipulation of other colours in the composition. Perhaps, to look at the matter from another angle, this concept can also be found in the compositional structural lines of the painted area. The manipulation of these compositional structural lines creates overlapping shapes of floral and cloud band motifs. They give the feeling of deep and shallow space, of ascending and descending, but these effects are tamed to produce balance and harmony in the whole composition.

Other than yellow and blue, Safavid Qur'âns also use red, vermilion and green, as well as some pastel colours in the family of red, blue and yellow. These colours usually used for specific subject matter in the composition, except for red which is sometimes used for borders. The favoured subject matter for these "lesser" colours comprises motifs such as different types of flowers, flower buds and Chinese cloud scrolls. Their placement is well distributed to give a jewel-like effect to the composition — 'light' from the colour pigments as well as 'light' from the lustre of gold. They are placed with precision to disperse the heaviness of the two major colours of blue and gold.





Pl. 13. Decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân. CBL Ms. 1558  
(Arberry no.156).

## **4.1 The process**

There are two main types of working procedures involved in designing an illuminated Qur'ân. The first type is to do with the design structure itself. The second type relates to the placement of the colours in the design structure. Both processes are interdependent in creating visual harmonies and their overall beauty. Equal emphasis was given to these two main areas; otherwise the end result would not have been achieved.

### **4.1.1 The first type of working procedures: the design structure**

In the first type, the design structure can be divided into three stages. The first stage is in the overall layout of the Qur'ân. This will determine the size and format of the design. In this stage, the design will involve basic geometric shapes such as triangles, circles, squares and rectangles, all of them being used to build up the hidden geometric structure of the design. The second stage is the filling up of this geometric structure with various types of design or pattern. This pattern is usually an organic or curvilinear structure. In some areas, there are also geometric line patterns but these are very minimal (see Fig. 6 a, b and c). The final stage is detailing the pattern with flowers and leaves as well as cloud bands (see Fig. 7). In most cases, these motifs are carefully drawn with black ink. In practical terms, the design itself reflects considerable concentration and skill on the part of the artist. There is no indication of black ink being used in the hidden geometric structure. Perhaps other methods and drawing materials were used to build up the hidden structure which in the end is not visible. Moreover, what is needed visually is a clearly drawn-up pattern so that colouring can take place. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that the hidden



geometric structure is less important. It is crucial that this first step is established and perceived clearly in the eye of the artist. Perhaps one could say that the artist had already predicted the end result of his design. The interplay of colours, 'picture planes' (defined by colours — like gold — that seem to come forward or, like blue, that seem to be recessed) and motifs, will be entirely dependent on the type of composition. Whether it is a simple or a complex design, everything depends on what level of quality is needed and on the cost of production.

#### **4.2.1 The second type of working procedures: colouring the design**

The second type relates to the colouring of this design or pattern. There are four stages of colouring involved. The first stage of colouring involves two colours, black and gold. Both are meant to establish a picture plane or picture ground in the composition. After the drawing of the pattern in black, gold is then used only selectively in certain areas of the design. Two types of gold are used in the design: lustre gold (see Fig. 8, a) and dull gold (see Fig. 8, b). Lustre gold is employed to highlight certain main in the composition, acting as the background colour for that particular area in the design. Dull gold is of two shades: greenish gold and reddish gold. They are mostly concentrated on two main areas, the lines of the border, flowers, leaves and branches. In other examples, these different tones of gold are used the other way round — dull gold for the background and lustre gold for highlighting motifs in the design. These two shades of gold are normally separated by fine black lines. There are examples of unfinished drawings which show that only black ink and gold were used at the first stage of the painting.<sup>132</sup> The remaining colours would be

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<sup>132</sup> See Lentz and Lowry in their chapter on 'The Kitabkhana and the Dissemination of the Timurid Vision', in *Timur*, 198, fig.67. For drawing using black and gold, see Soudavar in *Art of the Persian Courts*, cat.68; See too Sotheby's, 20 November 1986,

added only at a later stage. Gold is perhaps second only to black in the process of creating the illuminated page.

On the other hand, there are also cases of tinted gold being used against a non-tinted gold background. The tinted gold can be either of greenish gold or reddish gold.<sup>133</sup> Sometimes, for the purpose of highlighting certain areas, in this case the leaves, a tint of blue or red was used on the greenish gold or reddish gold. These tinted gold areas are confined to the leaves of floral motifs set against either a lustre gold or a dull gold background. Again, fine black outlines are used to separate or enhance the two areas, whether the distinction is between dull gold and lustre gold or between tinted gold and non-tinted gold. Perhaps without the fine black line, which is actually the hidden compositional structure, these gold-painted areas would look chaotic. This is because the very nature of gold itself generates light, which in turn enhances the decorative elements and demands particular attention in the design.<sup>134</sup> When looked at from different angles, it will give a different of the painted areas; and different angles give different feelings towards the composition. It is never static but rather is inherently dynamic. As stated earlier, gold generates light; and light in itself is beautiful and "beauty is a harmony of proportions".<sup>135</sup> This dynamism depends on controlled, balanced and harmonious proportions. When all the gold has been painted in the specified areas, following the structural design, the next step will be the placement of colours.

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lot 187.

<sup>133</sup> Laurie, *"Pigments and Medium"*, 1919.

<sup>134</sup> al-Haytham-Sabra, *Optics*, 144. See also Gage, *Colour*, 64.

<sup>135</sup> U. Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, tr. H. Bredin (London, 1989), 49.



The second stage of colouring involves the use of primary or basic colours: blue (lapis lazuli), red (cinnabar), and yellow (orpiment)<sup>136</sup> (see Fig. 9, a, b, c and d). In this example, drawn from the Chester Beatty Qur'ân Ms. 1558,<sup>137</sup> close examination suggests that the blue was painted immediately after the gold. Blue seems to invest most areas and forms the background colour in the design (see Fig. 9, a). Psychologically, blue seems to carry "descending" or "recessed" properties which make it suitable for the background plane or colour for the composition. It also creates distance or depth for the painted areas.<sup>138</sup> Blue can also be found in the outer border lines surrounding the design or, in some floral and ray-like lines painted in the empty space outside the stipulated areas of the main design (see Fig. 9, b). After blue, red (see Fig. 9, c) and yellow (Fig. 9, d) are added to the design. Different colours are used for different types of flowers and buds. The red flowers are not the same as the yellow flowers. Since these flowers are highly stylised or abstracted, it is not easy to identify them. The yellow flowers are perhaps of the lotus type. These illustrations show that they are well distributed in the design, which results in a well-balanced and harmonious design. There are no accidental elements in the placement of these colours. For example, there seems to be some kind of hidden triangular structure facing each other, in the way that yellow is distributed.

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<sup>136</sup> See Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *Sense*, 61.

<sup>137</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

<sup>138</sup> The concept of distance or depth used here is not the western concept of linear perspective and manipulation of colours to create depth. The concept of colours used in Islamic illuminated manuscripts involves "ascending" and "descending" colour properties. It is seen vertically or from an aerial view point and not horizontally as one views a modern painting. The illuminated Qur'ân is normally placed on a *rahl* and not on the wall or on a upright book stand, and is therefore viewed from above.

Structure and colour are used together and in complementary fashion to create quite subtle effects. For example, essentially flat colours are nonetheless employed to suggest depth. How is this done? At first glance, the light tonality of gold projects forward the areas painted in that colour, and by the same token the darker tonality of blue in the background seems to be recessed. These effects have to do with the psychology of perception and are hard to "prove". Similarly, the selfsame combination of colours can suggest further variations of plane by the superimposition of gold filigree designs on a blue background, or by triangular extensions (Pl. 8) from the main block which overlap that block; and here, though the same colours are used in the triangular shape as in the rectangular block, the viewer is in no doubt that four planes are suggested: the gold in the triangular shape creates the foremost plane, the blue "beneath" it creates the second plane, the gold in the rectangular block creates the third plane, and the blue in that same block constitutes the fourth plane, "furthest" away of all. To suggest all this spatial complexity with flat colours is a major feat of illusionistic design. Meanwhile, the predominantly blue border band leaps out at the viewer, thereby indicating that blue does not necessarily connote recession (Pl. 8). The various areas of gold also illustrate different planes while the white script floats above all the rest of the illumination. In this sense, then, colours can be termed "ascending" or "descending"; they obey rules of perspective that have nothing in common with Western systems. Nor are apparently matching elements truly identical; the entire decorative scheme is alive.

The third stage of colouring is the use of a group of 'pastel colours' in the design (see Fig. 10, a, b and c from a Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty collection<sup>139</sup>). These pastel colours are light blue, orange and pink. The light blue is used for the

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<sup>139</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

centre cloud band design and also for some of the little flower buds (Fig. 10b). The orange is used for the cloud bands left and right of the composition (Fig. 10a). Finally, the pink is used for the flowers and for other flower buds (Fig. 10c). Again, the arrangement of all these pastel colours follows a hidden diagonal or triangular structure, and the placement of these colours is well calculated to enhance the hidden structure and to create a symmetrical design.

The fourth and final stage of colouring is in the detailing of certain coloured areas so as to enhance the overall composition (see Fig. 11, a and b). The colour maroon can be found in both cloud bands, at the extreme left and right corners of the design, and in the little details at the tips of the leaves and at the centre of the flower motifs. Thus it deliberately highlights the notion of symmetry in the placement of colours in the composition. These highlighted areas hinders any search for a focal point in the composition. Everything is given equal strength and equal emphasis. Even when black (graphite) or white (lead)<sup>140</sup> is added, it does not upset the concept of equal emphasis. Black can suggest both projection and recession in a coloured composition. So does white, which is normally the area to attract most attention in a composition. But here, white seems to be on the same level as the rest of the colours. It is well controlled. Nothing is specially highlighted or given the most emphasis in the composition. The highlighted area is only the text and not the design. The design must not overpower the written text. But one may argue that there are examples of a full decorated page where the text loses its strength. This is normally the case for *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. Most Muslims have this section of the Qur'ân well memorised and the slightest trigger will ensure that it is automatically recited without any problem. Therefore, the text is already being transported into the heart of the

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<sup>140</sup> Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *Sense*, 61.

reciter. One might suggest that aesthetic appreciation is perhaps being taken to a higher level.

Finally, the combination of the two major elements discussed so far, structural design and colour placement, helps to create a complete compositional design in the Qur'ân. The compositional strength lies in the symmetrical design. It can be found at every stage, whether in the initial structural design or in the painted as well as the unpainted areas. In the painted areas, the background of blue and gold, the flowers and buds, the leaves and the branches, and lastly the cloud bands, are all carefully calculated in order to create a harmonious balance in the final composition. The structure helps to guide as well as balance the interplay of foreground and background in the picture plane. There is a constant interplay of projection and recession, or "ascending" and "descending", in the interplay of colours. A particular colour can suggest both projection and recession, for example black (see Fig. 12, a) and white (see Fig. 12, b). Likewise, in other colours, they move harmoniously within the composition. For example, yellow, when it is on a blue background, can be very distinct and at the same time less distinct when on a gold background. The controlling factor is perhaps the surrounding colour of that particular area. Therefore, one gets the feeling of a reciprocal interplay of colours produced via the controlling structural lines. These optical effects can best be studied in large painted areas in illuminated Qur'âns.

The above methods are mostly employed in the larger painted areas surrounding the frame of the text. Slightly different techniques are used for the smaller areas in illuminated Qur'âns, notably the marginal design (see Fig. 13). Normally the size here is in the range of 2 — 3 cm in diameter. Much emphasis is given to this marginal design because of its direct relationship with the text.



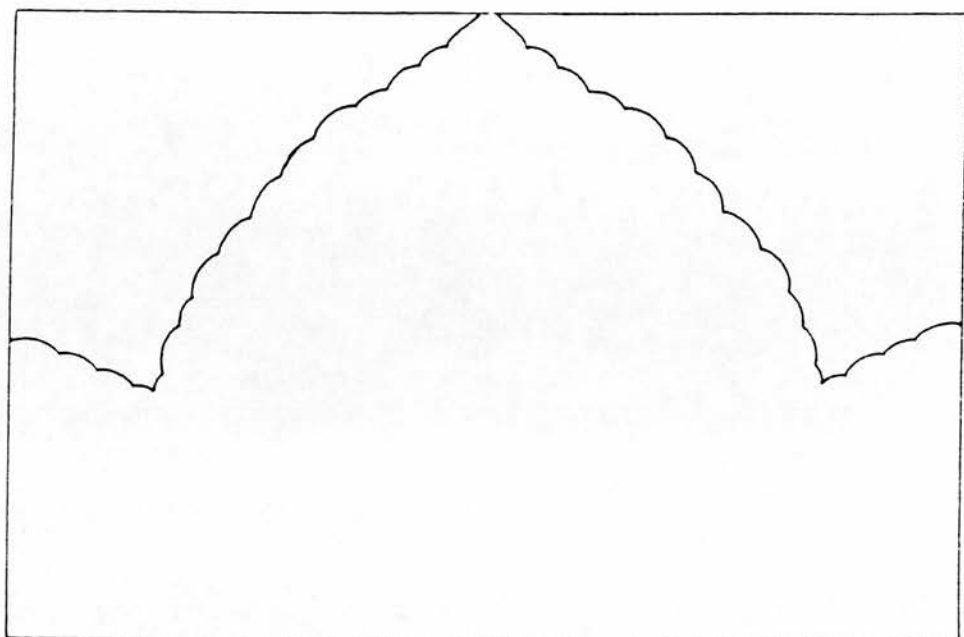
Therefore, extra care and thought were given to this marginal design, whether it needed a word such as *khamsah* or *hizb*, or just a consistent symbol representing the *khamsah* or *hizb*. It seems that the marginal design was painted prior to the head, fore-edge and tail margins. Logically, given its importance in relation to the text, this marginal design must be laid down first in order to avoid mistakes. Such mistakes are a very costly affair. According to Qâḍî Aḥmad, it is very difficult to erase any mistakes done in the manuscript, which suggests that this is an art of perfectionism and requires years of physical, mental and spiritual training.

In this small marginal design, which can be in a variety of shapes, the structure is still laid out in black ink. But this is only for the outer shape of the marginal design (see Fig. 13, a, b and c). After the black ink line comes the gold outline. Both of these are central to the function of the structural design. Next, the blue background is painted within the marginal design. Owing to its small scale it is fruitless to have a guiding pattern drawn within the marginal design, as can be found in the larger area. Instead, the little gold floral design was painted freehand without any guiding line structure (see Fig. 13). Close examination shows the brush marks on the surface of the blue background. This blue background has a dual function, first to fill the outline of the escutcheon shape, and second, to act as a background for the motifs which follow in the third stage. The third stage involves the use of pastel colours for the flowers and buds. Finally comes the word *khamsah* or *hizb* itself, painted in the middle of the marginal design. An example of this can be found in Pl. 14, where the word *khamsah* is painted in strong orange within the escutcheon-shaped marginal design. The painted word in orange is so intense against the blue background that it seems to be vibrating with the intended message. It is thus very successful, especially in laying the emphasis on the text rather than the design. What is important to any artist concerned with layout is the text itself. The presentation of the form of the book

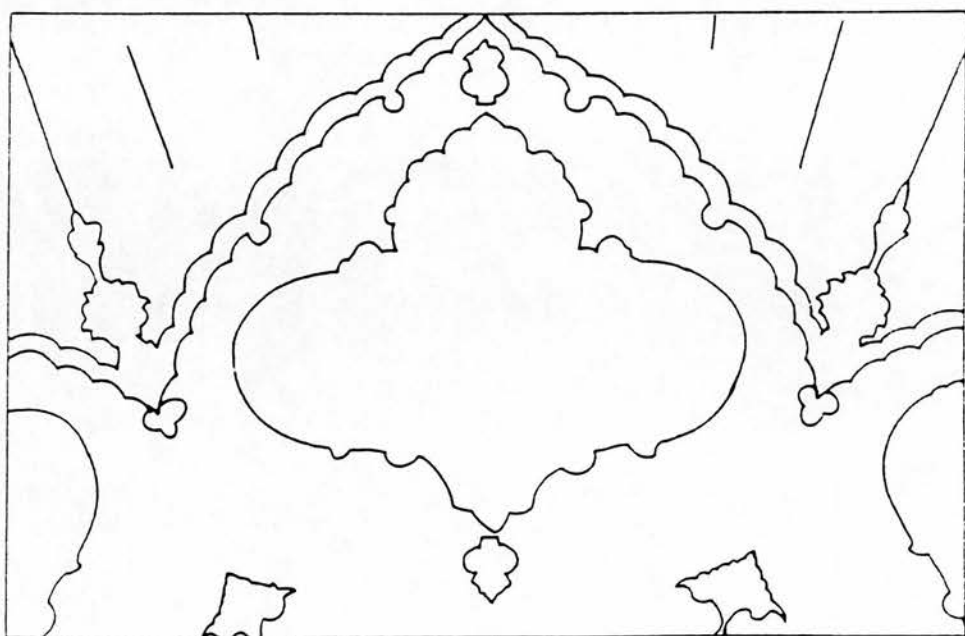
does not overshadow the content. In fact it should function in support of the content and presenting the correct image.<sup>141</sup> All this can be found in the illuminated Qur'âns of the Safavid era.

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<sup>141</sup> Tschichold, *Form*, 8-11.

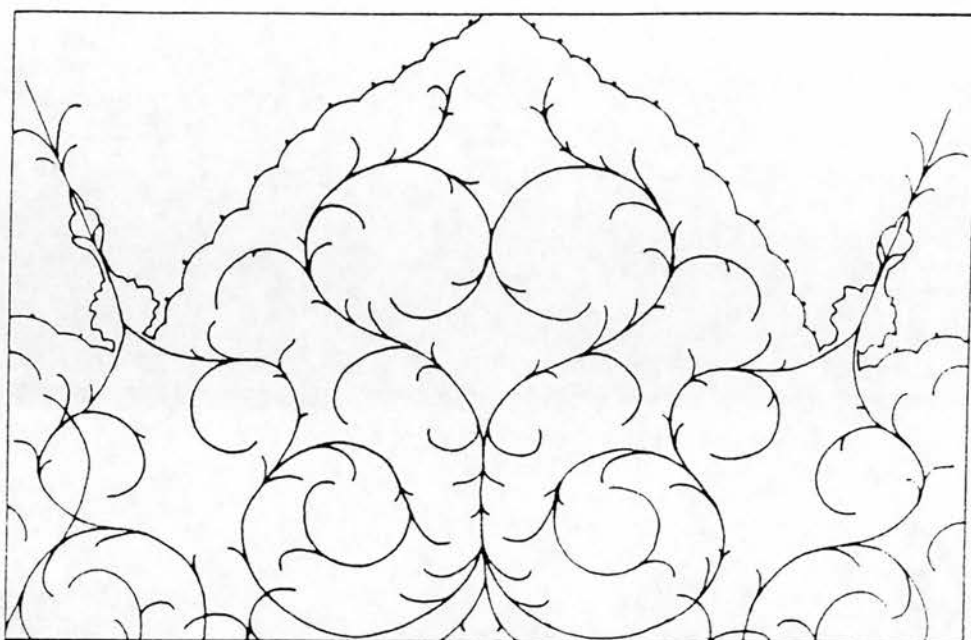


a.

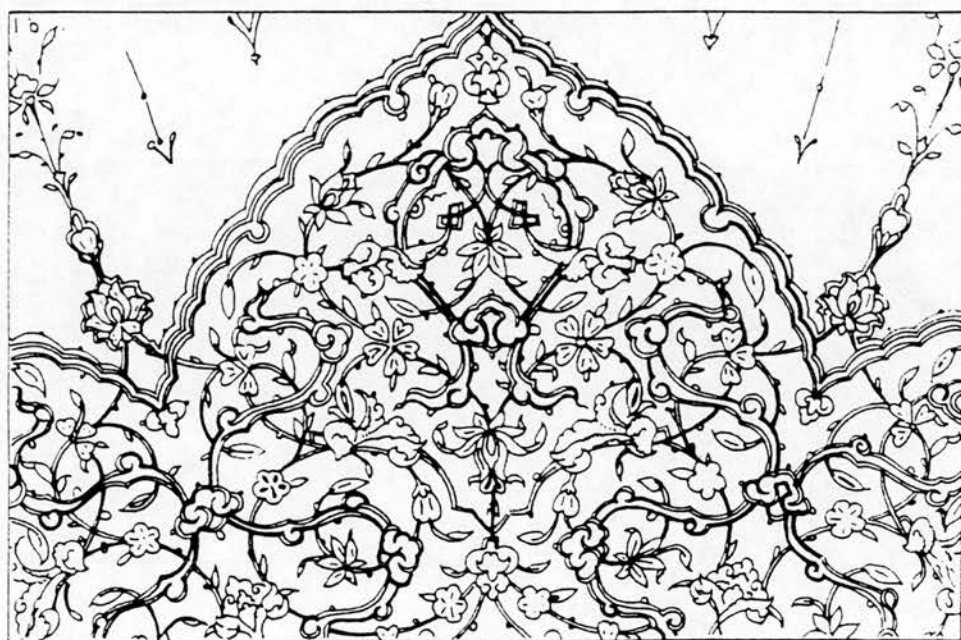


b.

Fig. 6, a and b. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



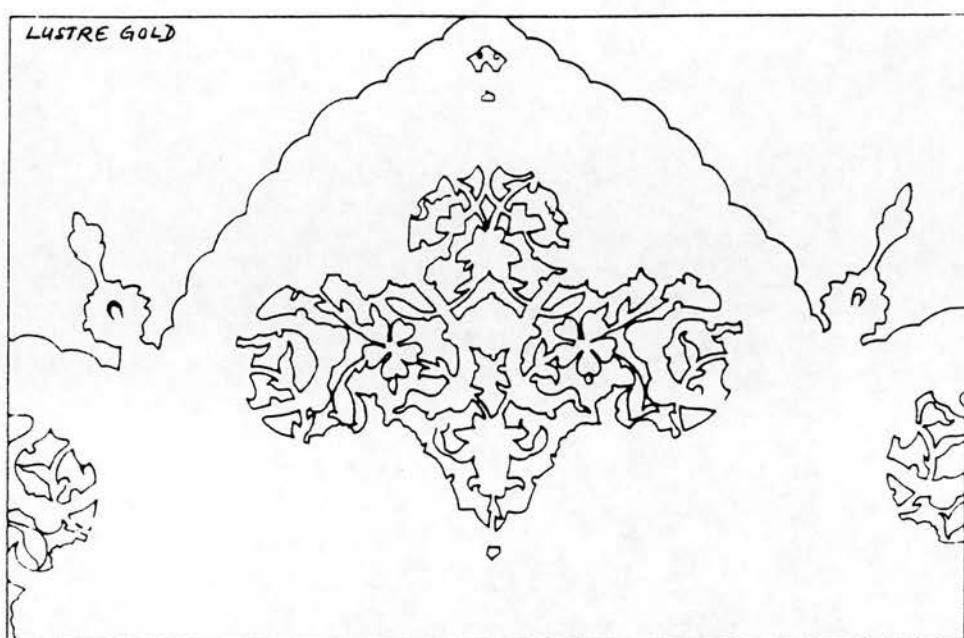
*Fig. 6c*



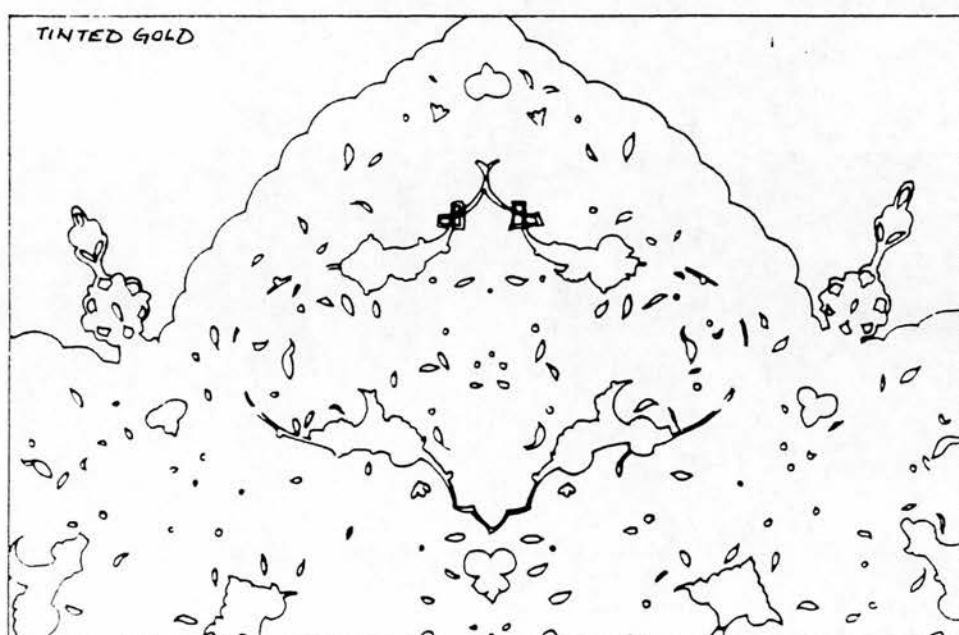
*Fig. 7*

Fig. 6, c and Fig. 7. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



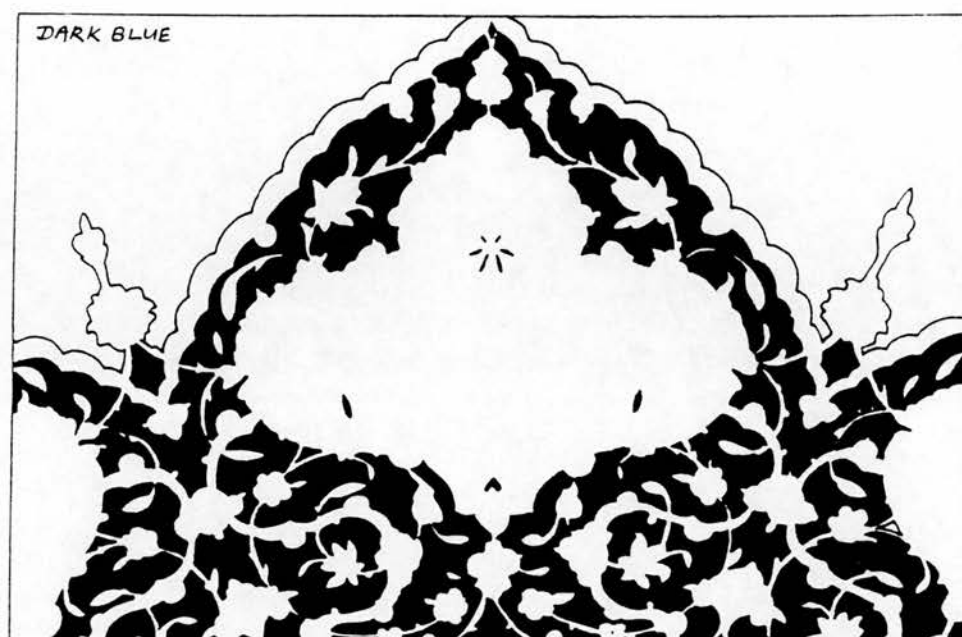


a.

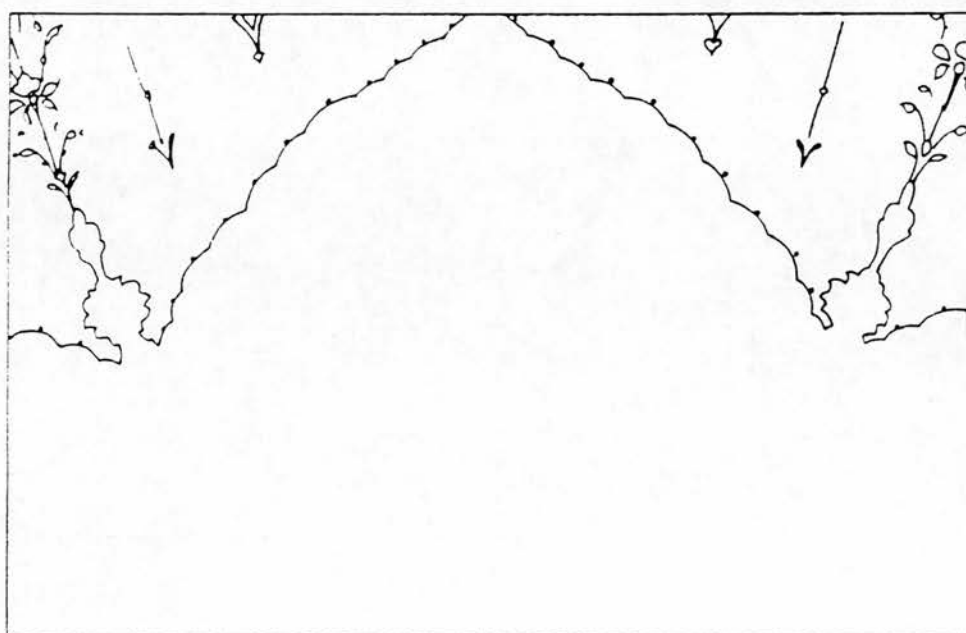


b.

Fig. 8, a and b. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

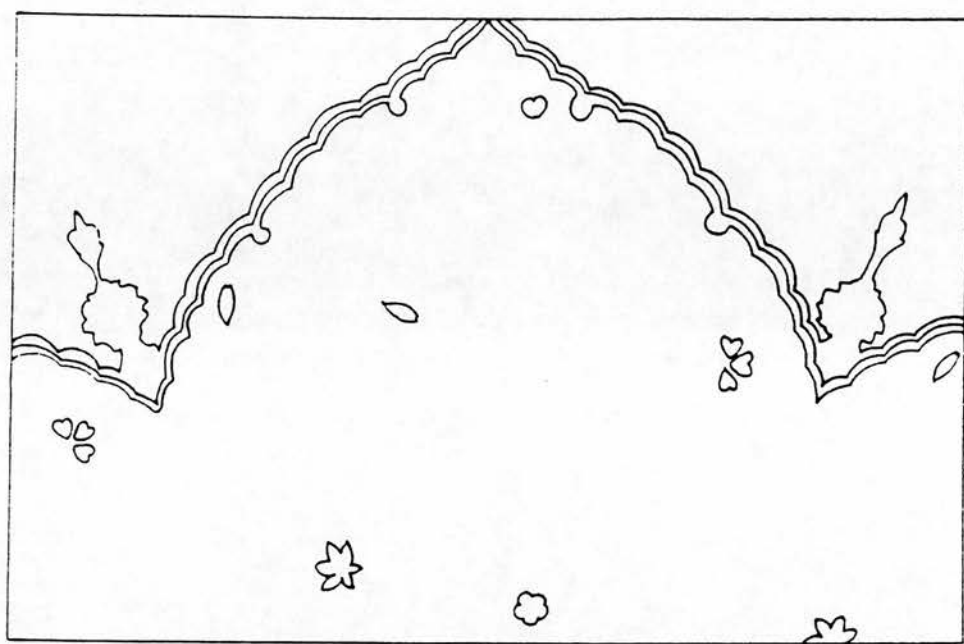


a.

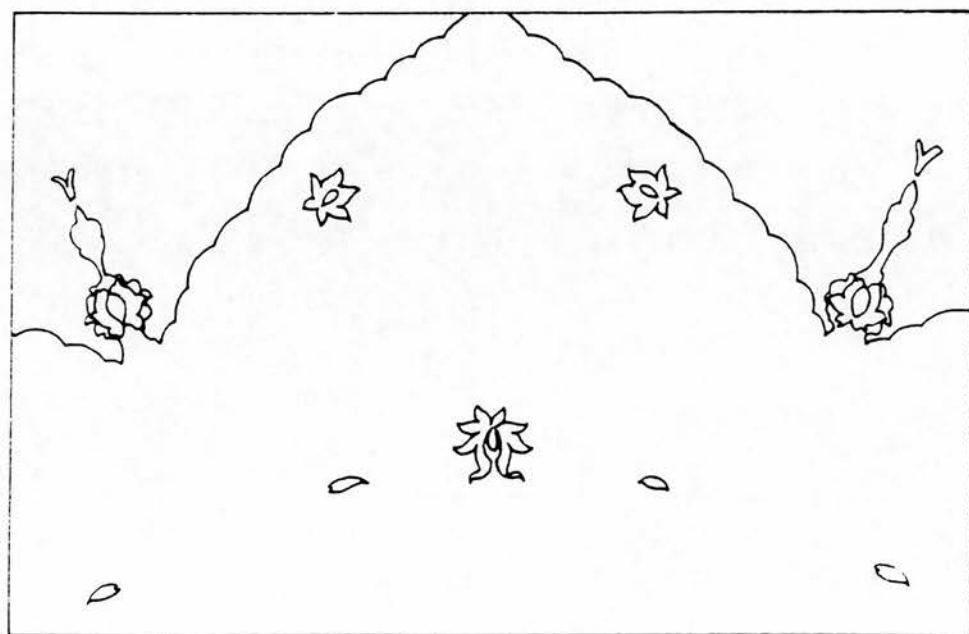


b.

Fig. 9, a and b. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



c.



d.

Fig. 9, c and d. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

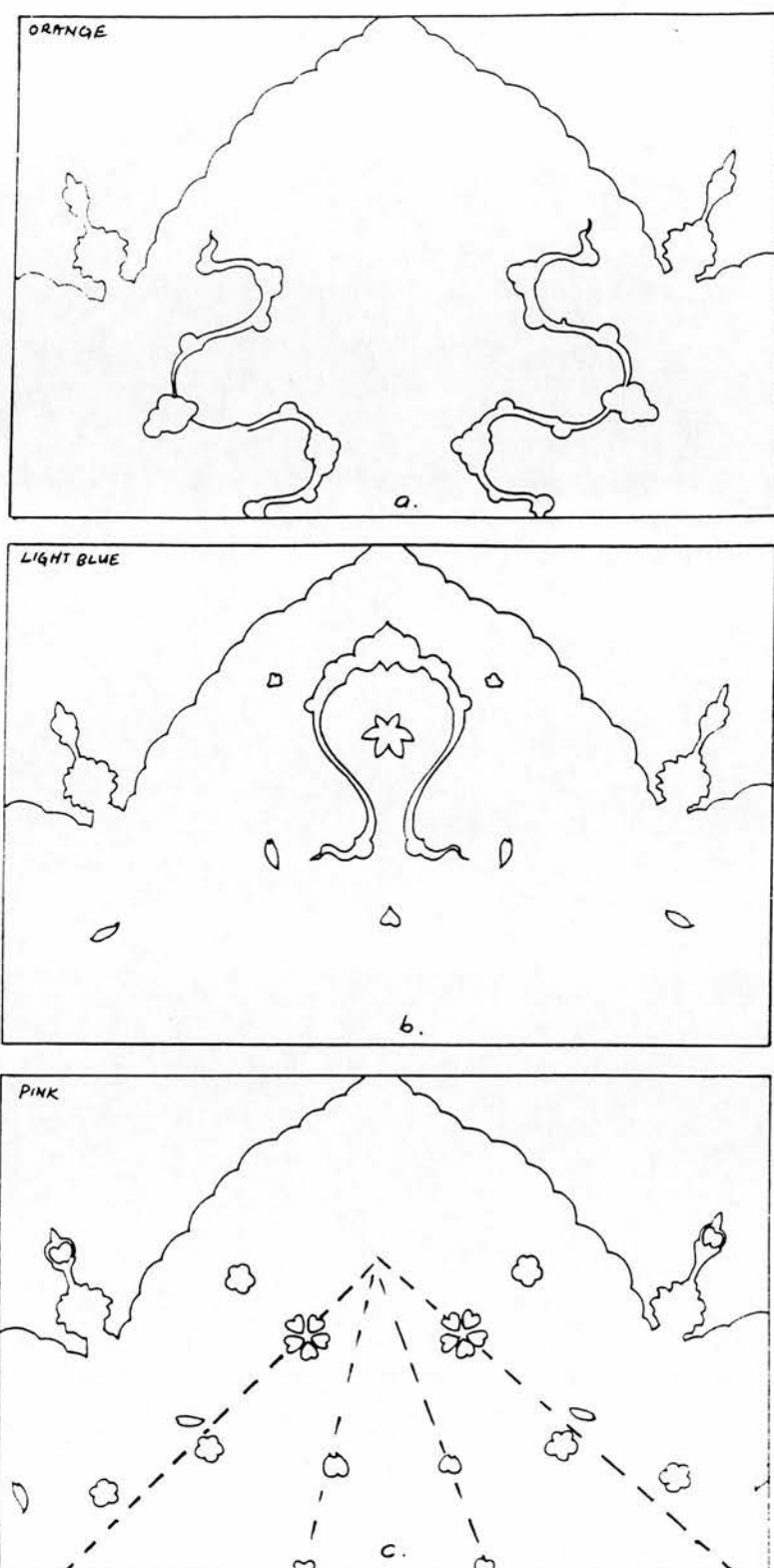
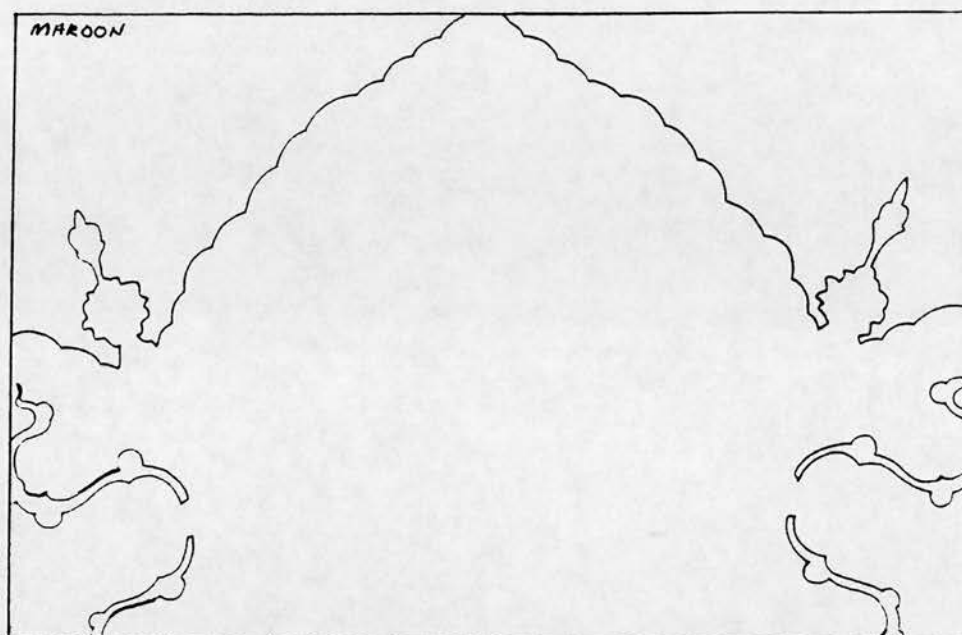
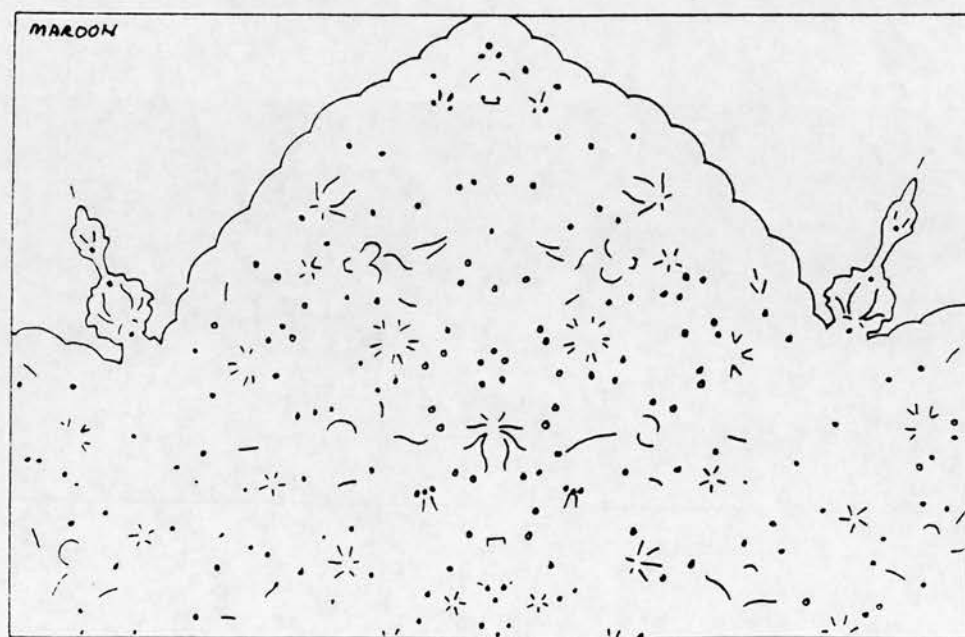


Fig. 10, a, b and c. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



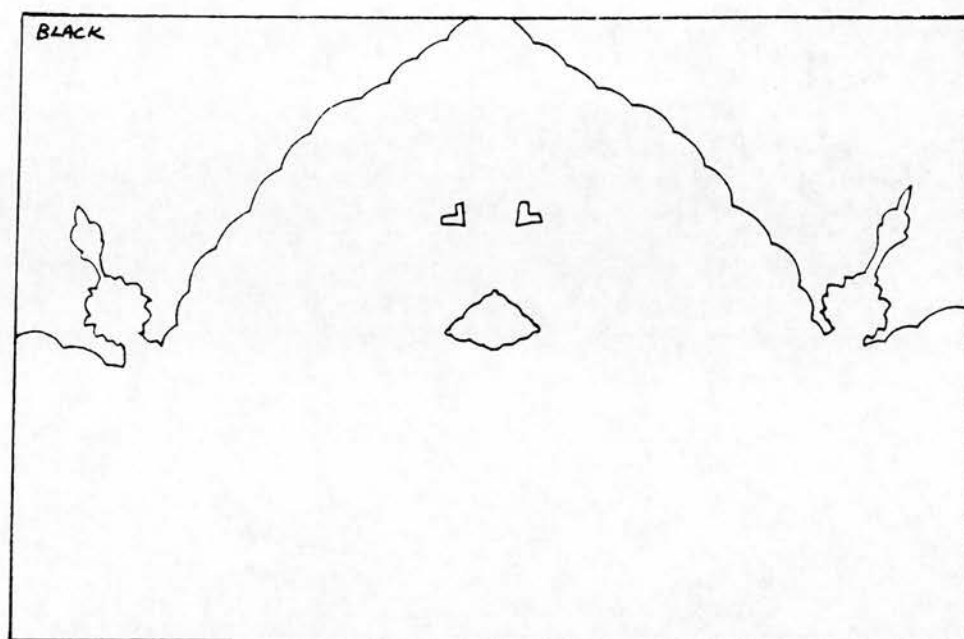


a.

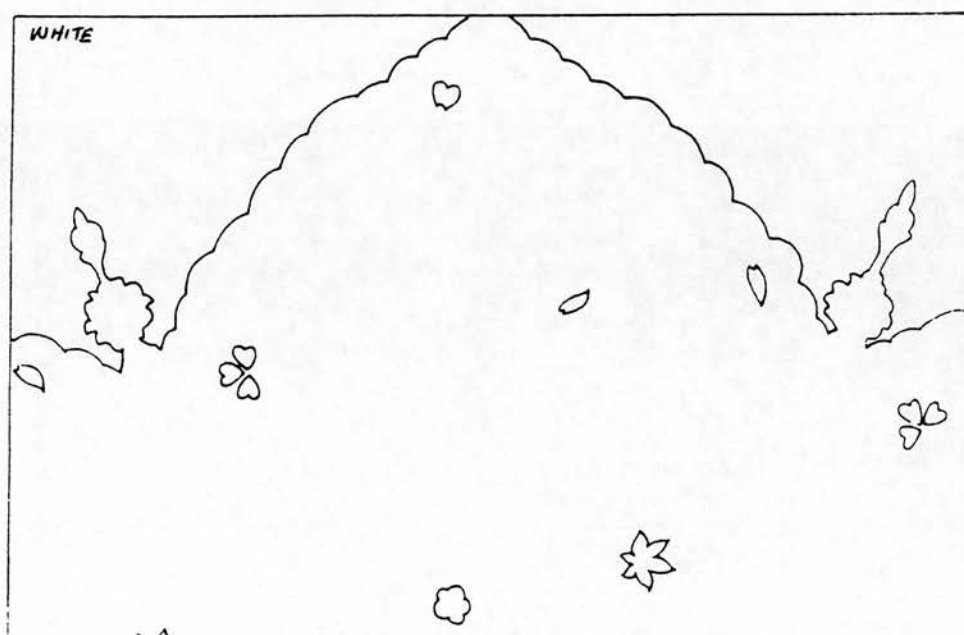


b.

Fig. 11, a and b. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



a.



b.

Fig. 12, a and b. Line drawings from decoration in a 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân.  
CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

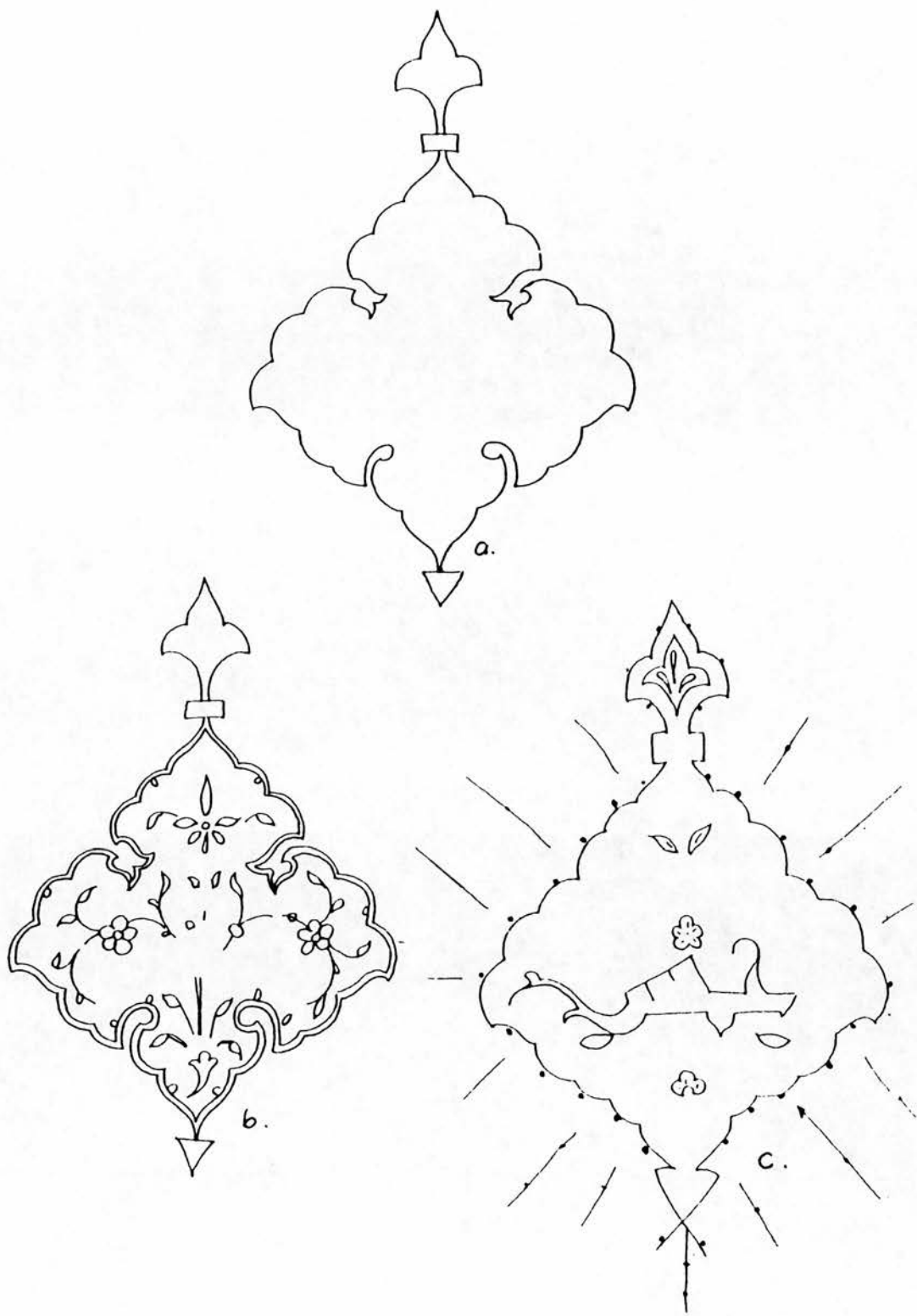
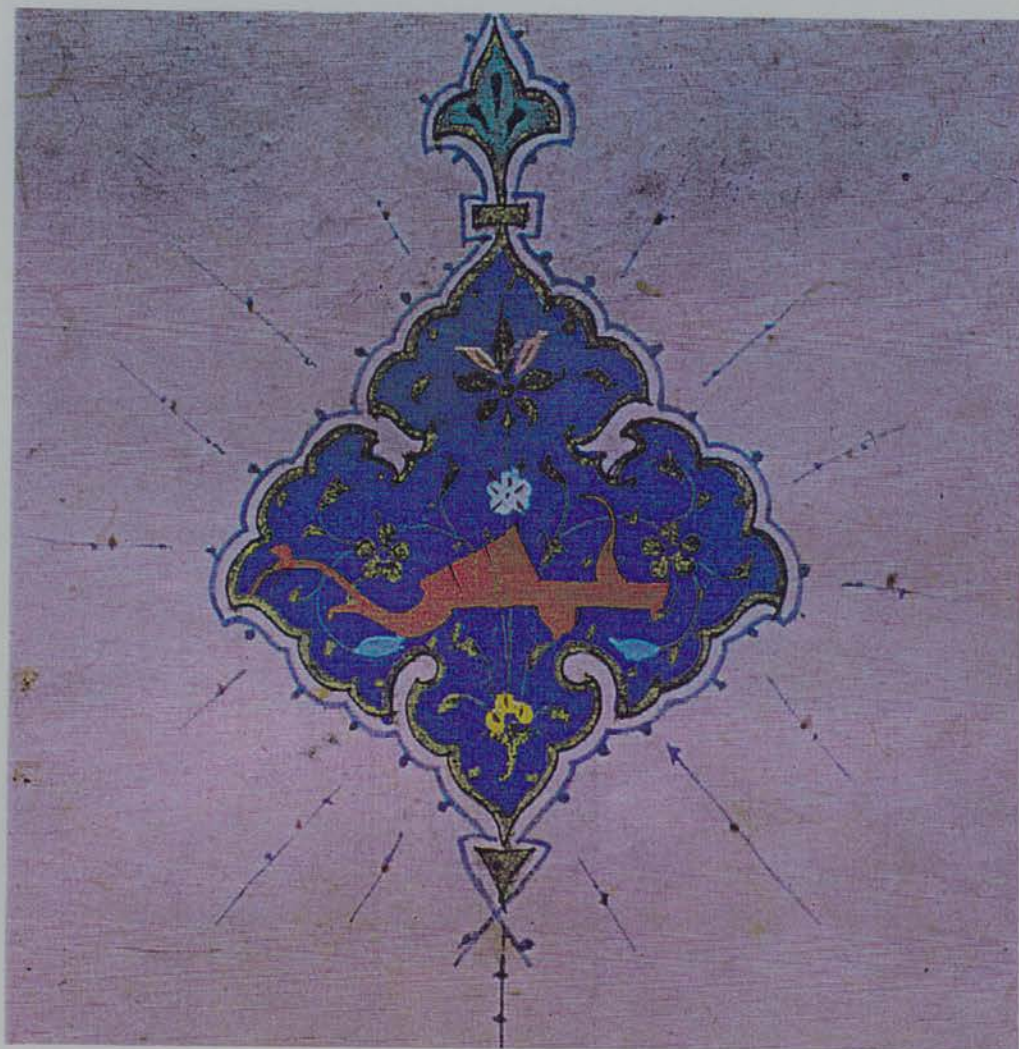


Fig. 13, a, b and c. Line drawings from a 16th-century khamseh symbol.  
CBL. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



Pl. 14. A 16th-century *kamsah* symbol. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).



## 5. Preliminary conclusion

The Safavid period refined and perfected basic working principles in the art of the illuminated manuscript. The concentration remains on the art of calligraphy, as is stated by at least two contemporaries: Qâḍî Aḥmad and Bâbâ Shâh. This is perhaps due to the belief that calligraphy is the highest form of art in Islam, since it deals directly with the word of God, the Qur'ân. In the process of attaining the highest order of aesthetic form in calligraphy, scores of master calligraphers had over the centuries developed the theoretical as well as practical canons governing this art. These are spread by oral tradition and are in many cases a workshop secret, although by the Safavid period, this did not inhibit the writing of treatises documenting this tradition.

To Muslims, calligraphy is the mother of all Islamic art. The twelve basic principles documented by Qâḍî Aḥmad and Bâbâ Shâh help in the understanding and appreciation of manuscript painting and illumination. What makes a beautiful illuminated Qur'ân can be analysed from these principles. The artist has to consider such basic elements of art as composition, proportion, space (which includes ascending and descending space), the weakness and strength of lines or strokes, and vertical and horizontal structure. These are key elements of style. Beyond that, the artist must know the tradition (including its masters) and the style within which he is working. Finally, with all this knowledge, he has to be truthful to himself in order to produce a fine work of art. That is what makes a master.

The artistic appreciation of a Safavid illuminated Qur'ân can be approached from two angles, namely those of the external and the internal form. So far as external

form is concerned, the names of the patron<sup>142</sup>, the scribe<sup>143</sup> and the illuminator<sup>144</sup> are of course technically non-Qur'ânic and thus not vital. Therefore, there are some Qur'âns with and some without this documentation. In theory, so far as many modern Muslims are concerned, there should be no supplementary written material in the Qur'ân. The holy text must be kept pure at all times. But it is quite another matter whether Safavid artists felt this way. Certainly there was no consistent ruling on this matter; hence the inclusion of commentaries, *du<sup>c</sup>a i-khatam*, *waqf* information and the rules for correct reading. The necessary research to establish when these additions, plus the names of the scribe, illuminator and patron, were carried out has yet to be done, though such little evidence as there is points to the 10th century as the period when this addition began. Nevertheless, all these external factors are well controlled and written in their own domain. For example, the commentaries were written in their own columns, while the scribe, the illuminator and the patron are sometimes recorded<sup>145</sup> on a page separate from the actual text of the Qur'ân. One may perhaps assume that the production of the Qur'ân begins with the text itself and probably not the decoration. As noted above, anything other than the copying of the text was probably regarded as secondary.

As for the internal form, it is concerned with the design concept, in which the science of the ergonomic also plays a part. The illuminated Safavid Qur'ân follows a formula from the very first double page of illumination. The text has to begin from the right-hand side of an open spread double page. This is religiously and culturally

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<sup>142</sup> Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 70.

<sup>143</sup> CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155). See line 9 in f. 209.

predetermined. When the first page of the text is illuminated, the following page on the left must also be illuminated. Indirectly, all this leads to a canon of page construction. Four major groups of Qur'ans, based on size, may be isolated: size A, B, C and D. Size A and size B may be considered as hand-held Qur'âns, whereas size C and size D may be considered as the *rahl* type of Qur'ân. The difference relates to the internal page layout. The former (Size A and B) has a well-balanced margin, with equal width for the head, fore-edge and tail margin (i.e. a margin proportion of 2:2:2:2). The text is always placed at the centre of the page. On the other hand, in the latter (Size C and D), the text is placed slightly towards the tail margin. The margin proportion in such cases is 2:6:6:3. How were these calculations made? There is little evidence in terms of surviving scribal tools to indicate a high degree of sophistication in the method whereby the page was laid out.<sup>146</sup> Most of these tools can be said to be ergonomically designed to suit the scribe/illuminator; they are, in short, practical.

In the decoration itself, several different stages are involved. The interplay of the colours is controlled by overlapping line structures to secure various optical effects. A single colour can function in both ways, either projecting or recessed in the picture plane. In fact, the basic principles listed by Qâdî Ahmad and Bâbâ Shâh can be seen at work in the illumination of Safavid Qur'âns.

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<sup>146</sup> See Vajifdar, *"Materials and Techniques of Islamic Illumination and Bindings"*, pp.44-46.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The layout of an illuminated Safavid Qur'ân**

#### **1. Size**

#### **2. The margin**

#### **3. The development of page layout**

##### **3.1. Before the 10th century A.D.**

##### **3.2. 10th to 15th centuries A.D.**

###### **3.2.1. The plain frame**

###### **3.2.2. The external decorated frame**

###### **3.2.3. The 'spine ruling'**

###### **3.2.4. The 'U-shaped' frame**

##### **3.3. Qur'âns during the Safavid period**

###### **3.3.1. Changes in the frame**

###### **3.3.2. The zig-zag frame**

###### **3.3.3. The 'spine ruling'**

###### **3.3.4. The 'U-shaped' frame**

#### **4. Preliminary conclusion**



## 1. Size

In this study, 138 Qur'âns were examined<sup>1</sup> of which 35 Qur'âns were of 13th to 15th century date and 71 Qur'âns were of the Safavid period. These Qur'âns were of many different dimensions. This suggests that there is no one standard size specially reserved for the Qur'ân. Each copy has its own identity or artistic standard depending on who commissioned or produced it. These Qur'âns can be grouped into four different sizes (see Table 1).<sup>2</sup>

Qur'ân (13th-17th C.)	Measurement			
	Height	width	Height	Width
<b>Size 'A'</b>	between 85	x 53 mm	and 187	x 132 mm
<b>Size 'B'</b>	between 200	x 130 mm	and 299	x 200 mm
<b>Size 'C'</b>	between 300	x 180 mm	and 395	x 280 mm
<b>Size 'D'</b>	between 420	x 310 mm	and 810	x 610 mm

Table 1.<sup>3</sup>

In the period between the 13th and 15th centuries, 17% of the Qur'âns considered in this study are of size 'A', 26% of size 'B'; 40% of size 'C' and 17% of size 'D', whereas in the period between the 16th and 17th centuries, 7% are of size 'A', 32% of size 'B';

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<sup>1</sup> This study was based on Qur'âns in the Chester Beatty Library, the British Library, the S.O.A.S. Library, the John Rylands Library, Glasgow University Library, Edinburgh University Library, and Qur'âns published in Christie's and Sotheby's auction catalogues.

<sup>2</sup> These groupings were made on the basis of the size of a single page and excluding their covers.

<sup>3</sup> This study did not uncover any Qur'âns with height dimensions between 188-99 mm and 396-419 mm. Presumably, however, these do exist even if they are rare.

51% of size 'C' and 7% of size 'D'. It seems, then, that size 'C' is the most favoured size among all the sizes listed and at all periods. About 40% of the size 'C' Qur'âns are found in the period between 13th and 15th centuries, and 51% between the 16th and 17th centuries. Furthermore, there seems to be a 7% decline in size 'A' and a 10% decline in size 'D' Qur'âns during the Safavid period as compared to the earlier period. On the other hand, there was an increase of 5% in size 'B' and a 12% increase in size 'C' (see Table 2).

Period	Size	Qur'ân	Percentage	
13th-15th C.	A	6	17	
	B	9	26	
	C	14	40	
	D	6	17	
16th-17th C.	A	7	10	decreases by 7%
	B	23	32	increases by 5%
	C	36	51	increases by 12%
	D	5	7	decreases by 10%

Table 2.

The changes in the sizes of the Qur'âns could be related to the patrons themselves. Most likely, the scarcity of size 'D' Qur'âns - the really big Qur'âns - is due to a fall in the demand for them. The cost implications of a large Qur'ân are of course significant. Paper is a very expensive material and the more paper consumed the more costly the Qur'ân will be. Thus, large Qur'âns were normally commissioned by wealthy patrons such as royal patrons or governors, and they were used as special gifts. For example, a large Qur'ân was used to mark a newly-built religious building such as a mosque, madrasah or mausoleum, or to renew friendship and maintain a

long-lasting peace between two rulers of Islamic states. Thus they were frequently used for ceremonial purposes. But at times when fewer mosques were being built, especially during the period of Shâh Tahmâsp I, it seems likely that fewer large Qur'âns were commissioned for these ceremonial purposes. According to Anthony Welch, during the period of Shâh Tahmâsp I "much of Iran's wealth served a single aesthetic sense: the artefacts of use and the arts of conviction languished under his rule, while the fine arts of the personal aesthetic flourished."<sup>4</sup> According to Abolala Soudavar, in the thirty-four camel-loads of precious gifts from Shâh Tahmâsp to the new Ottoman ruler, "the most highly valued items, however, were a manuscript of the Qorân [*sic*]."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately the size of this Qur'ân is not known, though William Robinson has attempted to identify the manuscript in question.<sup>6</sup> One can assume, however, that such a gift must be of the finest quality of Qur'ânic art and of high value in the overall gifts to the new Ottoman ruler.

The decrease in the production of size 'A' Qur'âns was probably due to the fact of its small size. Obviously, a small Qur'ân requires special skills from the scribes as well as the illuminators in handling its minute decoration. Obviously, this will cost more and will thus require a wealthy patron. In this study, the number of size 'A' and size 'D' Qur'âns suggests that wealthy patrons were rare. A Size 'A' Qur'ân is perhaps more of a personalised item whereas size 'D' is more appropriate for a ceremonial or institutional gift. These two sizes can be defined as not meant for the general masses but for select groups of people. Furthermore, highly detailed works need special ability and perhaps special equipment or aids such as magnifying glasses or spectacles.

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<sup>4</sup> A. Welch, *Shâh 'Abbâs & the Arts of Isfahan* (New York, 1973), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, 164.

<sup>6</sup> See Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, pp. 94-97, lot 232.

Naturally, over a period of time, this will affect the artist's vision and eventually artists will need spectacles to produce a manuscript. Spectacles did not come cheap at this time and are a western phenomenon during the Safavid period. In other words, they are an imported item. According to Annemarie Schimmel:

"Knowing the difficult circumstances under which many of the calligraphers and scribes worked, one wonders if their eyes did not fail them over the course of the years. It seems that at least from the sixteenth century onward it was unusual to write small calligraphy without eyeglasses. The first concrete remark pertaining to the use of spectacles is connected with Shah-Mahmud [sic] Nishapuri in the mid-sixteenth century, who wrote inscriptions and decorative pages wearing glasses."<sup>7</sup>

As noted in Iskandar Munshî's account, there were times when the business of book production was not as lucrative as before<sup>8</sup> and the production of manuscripts tended to diminish. Moreover, the copying of a Qur'ân requires full concentration and demands far more time than the copying of secular books. The scribe is under tremendous pressure to make sure that his work is an exact copy of the original text. A well-known theologian, <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Qâri (d.1605) managed to produce only a single superb Qur'ân every year and to earn his living by selling it.<sup>9</sup> Illuminators before the 16th century had saturated the decorated pages of the Qur'ân with illumination to an unprecedented degree, so by the end of the 16th century the copying of the text proper was kept far simpler visually than hitherto.<sup>10</sup> Thus, with all these limitations, the fall in the production of size 'A' Qur'ân was inevitable.

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<sup>7</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> Arnold, *Painting*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, 57.

<sup>10</sup> R. Hillenbrand, "The Qur'ân Illuminated", *Art History* 17/1 (March 1994), 124.



The size 'C' Qur'ân is an ideal size and easy to handle. It was the most suitable size for artists to work with and was the type most preferred by patrons. This size is of average dimensions, not too big and not too small (see Table 1). Coincidentally, more or less similar measurement can be found in both religious (principally Qur'ânic) and secular books. For example, the measurements of a Sa<sup>c</sup>di *Bûstân* copied by "Mohammad-Qasem son of Shâdishâh [*sic*]",<sup>11</sup> probably from Herât and datable ca. 1528 A.D., are 22.2 x 14 cm. These measurements could easily be matched in Safavid Qur'âns. For example the measurements of a single-volume Qur'ân copied by Muhammad Husayn ibn Muhyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harawi, from Herât or Bukhârâ, dated 944-5/1537-8, are 225 x 145 mm.<sup>12</sup> Apart from the measurements, the illuminated layout design also seems quite similar and appears to have been produced from a master copy. The making of book of size 'C', from the 16th century onwards, became rather mechanically done in order to meet the high demand for this material. In fact this phenomenon had already existed in the second half of the 15th century when the Commercial Turkoman style in secular manuscripts was evolved to keep pace with demand.<sup>13</sup> Presumably, a standard size of paper might have been produced by many paper workshops. Thus, a special size of paper might be required specially for commissioned work.

However, it is not uncommon to find artists working on both religious and secular books in a royal library, atelier or workshop, or in a bazaar system of book production; or even in smaller units or family businesses as stated by Budaq

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<sup>11</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, 194. See *Sotheby's*, 8-9 October 1979, lot 261; *Christie's*, 11 April 1989, lot 29.

<sup>12</sup> James, *AT*, 124.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

Qazwini.<sup>14</sup> Ruzbihan Muhammad,<sup>15</sup> the famous scribe-illuminator of Shîrâz in the early 16th century,<sup>16</sup> was known not only for his three-volume illustrated manuscript of the *Kulliyât* of Sa<sup>c</sup>di (Oxford),<sup>17</sup> but also for his illuminated Qur'âns.<sup>18</sup> He came from a line of scribes and illuminators and could have easily had his own family business in book production.<sup>19</sup> From a practical point of view, size 'C' is most suitable for libraries at home, in the mosque, madrasah, university, or even in the *warrâq*'s book shop. It is also practical for trade, especially for merchants travelling from one city to another.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. The margin

Even though there seems to have been a shift of fashions so far as the size of Qur'âns was concerned, throughout the centuries a consistent concept of measurement was applied to the layout of the margins used in Qur'âns. In a typical western medieval manuscript, the measurement of the four margins in the layout of a page is normally in the ratio of 1.5 : 2 : 3 : 4.5. In other words, the fore-edge margin

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>15</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 67.

<sup>16</sup> James, *AT*, 144.

<sup>17</sup> Bodleian Library, MS. Fraser 73.

<sup>18</sup> CBL Ms.1558 (Arberry No 156). See D. James, *QB*, 77; and in Part II : Qur'âns of the 16th century, in *AT*, pp.144-149.

<sup>19</sup> James, *AT*, 145.

<sup>20</sup> Schimmel, *Calligrapher*, 66.

is twice the length of the inner margin, while the tail margin is one and the half time bigger than the head margin.<sup>21</sup> This rule is also commonly found in the mounts within which the frames of much western painting or graphic art. The measurement of these margins in the mount within which the painting was set was based on the centre of gravity. The centre of gravity is always placed below the geometrical centre and customarily more space is left at the bottom than at the top.<sup>22</sup> Psychologically, this technique gives an impression of centrality,<sup>23</sup> stability and less downward pull to the subject matter, when shown in an upright position. The experiment conducted by Langfeld shows that:

"If one is asked to bisect a perpendicular line without measuring it, one almost invariably places the mark too high. If a line is actually bisected, it is with difficulty that one can convince oneself that the upper half is not longer than the lower half."<sup>24</sup>

This means that if, in obedience to visual intuition,<sup>25</sup> one divides the book into two halves and wants to give the impression that the two halves look alike, one must make the upper half shorter. Therefore, we find that in any picture mounting or framing, the tail margin is always broader than the head margin. This concept is probably applicable to the layout design of a manuscript.

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<sup>21</sup> Johnston, *Formal*, pp.130-132. Compare Ill. 1 on page 146 of this thesis, which sets out typical margins of a Qur'ân.

<sup>22</sup> R. Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception. A Psychology of the Creative Eye* (London, 1974), pp.31-32.

<sup>23</sup> Arnheim, *Power*, 92.

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>25</sup> According to Arnheim, intuitive statements are based on the behavior of visual forces. These forces are the constituents of every visual experience; see Arnheim, *Power*, 3.

The formula used in the layout of a Qur'ân is slightly different. In fact it is the opposite of what has just been described. The head margin is always bigger than the tail margin. At times, the fore-edge margin is bigger than the other margins. This is probably because of the manner of recitation, which affects the general layout of the Qur'ân. Similar formulae in page layout are also found in secular manuscripts. This can be seen in a double-page illuminated frontispiece of the *Gulistân* of Sa<sup>c</sup>di, copied by Sultân <sup>c</sup>Alî Mashhadi, possibly written for Amîr <sup>c</sup>Alî Shîr Nawâ'i, from Herât and dated 891/1486.<sup>26</sup> Another comparable example can be seen in the double-page frontispiece to the Baysunghur introduction to the Shâh Tahmâsp *Book of Kings*, folio 2 verso and 3 recto, datable ca. 1530-35 A.D.<sup>27</sup> This device is noticeable too in any illustrated pages that consist of part of the composition extended beyond the main frame, or have an overlapping picture plane within a double frame. Both methods were simply used psychologically to force the composition downward, in other words to make it bottom heavy and leave more space at the top of the page. Comparable examples can be seen in the *Bustân* of Sa<sup>c</sup>di signed by Muhammad Qasim al-Shâhdishâh from Herât and dated 933/1527.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, from an ergonomic point of view, making the width of the head margin bigger helps to reduce visual fatigue during recitation. A broader head margin helps to position the text nearer to the reader. The positioning of the text blocks in the page layout actually complies with the limited nature of the movements of the human head. Scientific experiment shows that the movement of the human head has about a

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<sup>26</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, cat. no. 36 (fols. 2v, 3r).

<sup>27</sup> S. C. Welch, *Wonders of the Age: Masterpieces of Early Safavid Painting, 1501-1576* (Harvard, 1979), 41.

<sup>28</sup> *Op.cit.*, pp.174-175, cat. nos. 66a-66c.



forty-degree angle of 'flexion'.<sup>29</sup> To further position the text at the centre of the two facing pages, the fore-edge margin is also made bigger than the rest of the margins.<sup>30</sup> Apparently, in both western and Islamic manuscripts, there is a fundamental need to create spatial illusion in the design of manuscripts. They were created to serve specific purposes, for example to evoke a relaxed atmosphere as well as to give maximum enjoyment to the viewer. According to Wade:

"Geometrical illusions are relatively small distortions of visual space. The distortions can relate to size, shape, direction or movement. They are called illusions because the configurations all contain the potential information that could lead to correct spatial perception."<sup>31</sup>

By manipulating geometrical illusions and measurements, the artist is able psychologically, to create a maximum focus of attention<sup>32</sup> for the reader of the Qur'ân, as if there were the visual allusion that the text (by virtue of the reduced tail margin) is being brought closer to the reader. The text itself, the *rahl*, which supports the Qur'ân and the position of the reader's head are all inter-related. The human body and the mind are thus both conditioned to receive the text. Symbolically, the central position of the text has a double role to play. Firstly, the measurements of the page

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<sup>29</sup> H. Murell, *Ergonomics: Man in His Working Environment* (London, 1965), 51.

<sup>30</sup> All these measurements can only be seen clearly in a manuscript which retains its original form and is untrimmed. In most cases, out of ignorance, the margins are trimmed to give an equal measurement when new covers are needed to replace the old ones. The present study also found glaring mistakes in the binding of most Qur'âns. The cover with the flap was wrongly placed, that is, on the right hand side, whereas the correct place should be on the left. This mistake could only have been made by a non-Muslim binder who was ignorant of the Arabic way of reading a book.

<sup>31</sup> N. Wade, *The Art and Science of Visual Illusions* (London, 1982), 162.

<sup>32</sup> According to C. J. Holmes, "a good picture has one subject, not two or three subjects; one focus and not several"; see his chapter, 'Emphasis of Plan', in *Notes on the Science of picture-making* (London, 1927), 61.

layout, which positioned the text at the centre, had indirectly created a sense of permanence for the sacred word. Secondly, it gave the reader a certain spiritual concentration, "where he can find integral reality - sacredness". The "desire, so deeply rooted in man, to find himself at the very heart of the real — at the Centre of the World, the place of communication with Heaven"<sup>33</sup> helps to explain this positioning. Through the ages and in most cultures, the central position is used to give visual expression to the divine or to some other exalted power.<sup>34</sup>

The examples<sup>35</sup> given by El-Sa'id and Parman seem to focus only on the internal activities within the four margins. These illustrations do not give the overall format of the page layout in the Qur'ân. Their analysis neglects a very important aspect of a double page layout, that is the head, tail, fore-edge and inner margin. El-Sa'id's second book<sup>36</sup> illustrates the underlying formula for grids using the root two system of proportion in Islamic patterns.<sup>37</sup> Although this is theoretically viable, again in reality it needs further investigation, especially in view of the fact that his theory<sup>38</sup> focuses only on the areas within the framed ruling and not on the overall page design.

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<sup>33</sup> M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism*, tr. P. Mairet (London, 1961), 54.

<sup>34</sup> Arnheim, *Power*, pp.72-73.

<sup>35</sup> See El-Sa'id & Parman, in their chapter on the 'Analyses of Patterns in the Applied Arts' in *Geometric*, pp.148-151, figs.102a-103c

<sup>36</sup> I. El-Said, *Islamic Art and Architecture. The system of Geometric Design*, ed. T. El-Bouri & K. Critchlow, (Reading, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>38</sup> Past research on illustrated Islamic books has tended to neglect the margins which are a very important aspect that determines the overall impact of the composition. The original aesthetic value of the manuscripts was often destroyed because of the trimming of the pages in order to accommodate new covers.

On the one hand, geometry is said to have been used in the inner frame of the Qur'ân, but on the other hand, the outer frame though measured, probably reflects a break away from the 'root two system' - and this refers, obviously, to pages that have *not* been trimmed and which therefore retain their original dimensions.. In reality, this page layout is a compound or interplay of both artistic intuition and the science of geometry. Though geometry is a necessity in art, as it gives a comprehensive and correct idea of form, not all art depends on strict geometry.<sup>39</sup>

Geometry seems to be the hidden structure in Islamic patterns, but not from a strictly mathematical point of view. Geometrical elements are probably expressed on the basis of a rather intuitive artistic visual calculation and not on the basis of using real mathematical instruments. If there were any instruments used, they were perhaps of an unsophisticated nature. To Holmes, when the artist is bound to use strictly geometrical calculation in his composition, it loses its ingenuity, artistic talent or flair.<sup>40</sup>

### **3. The development of page layout**

#### **3.1. Before the 10th century A.D.**

Some fundamental designs in page layout had been indirectly formulated before the Safavid period. Qur'âns before the 10th century A.D. were predominantly of horizontal rectangular format. They were written not on paper but on vellum or parchment. Their page layouts were more or less of equal measurement for the head

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<sup>39</sup> Schauer mann, *Theory*, pp.1-18.

<sup>40</sup> Holmes, *Notes*, 68.

and tail margins and had a slightly bigger fore-edge margin. But the early introduction of a slightly bigger head margin than tail margin can be detected. An example of this can be seen in a single folio of a Qur'ân datable to the end of the 8th century A.D. in the Khalili collection.<sup>41</sup> Another feature is the framing of the text. This framing technique was introduced in the 9th century A.D. The framing is either in black or gold lines surrounding the text. They were very simple and mark the beginning of defining the four margins (head, tail, fore-edge and inner margins) of the Qur'ân. By defining the text area, thus, this device gave full autonomy to decorative vignettes in the space provided within the fore-edge margins. Design-wise, it carries a specific meaning of marking the beginning of a *sûrah* or a section. An example of this can be seen in part 2 of a 30-part Qur'ân, probably from North Africa or Egypt and datable to the end of the 9th century A.D.<sup>42</sup> These are some of the early traces of the layout tradition found in horizontal rectangular Qur'âns.

### **3.2. 10th to 15th centuries A.D.**

The 10th century marked the introduction of a vertical rectangular format for Qur'âns which has lasted to the present day. The tradition of designing the page layout in the horizontal rectangular format Qur'âns continued to operate, but with more sophistication, and now in a vertical rectangular format. Four main characteristics have been identified in this study. They are the plain frame, the frame with external decoration, the 'spine ruling' and the 'U-shaped' format. The

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<sup>41</sup> Khalili, KFQ93. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.11.

<sup>42</sup> Khalili, QUR372, folio 2a. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.24.



development of page layout in the illuminated Qur'âns will now be considered in detail:

### 3.2.1. The plain frame

Basically, there were two types of frame found in early 10th century vertical rectangular format Qur'âns. They are the hidden frame format and the lined frame format. The former consists of text written in an unlined hidden structure, as shown in the two folios of a Qur'ân in the Khalili collection datable to the end of the 9th century or the first half of the 10th century A.D.<sup>43</sup> (see Fig. 1a, no. 1). This design gradually developed into a tripartite hidden structure as can be found in a 13th-century Qur'ân<sup>44</sup> (see Fig. 1a, no. 2). All the texts were written within the allocated hidden frame in the page layout. The latter consists of lined frames in a format clearly drawn in gold and black lines which separate the areas between the texts and the margins as shown in a Qur'ân datable to the second half of the 10th century A.D.<sup>45</sup> This design gradually developed into a horizontal tripartite format within the frame. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Qutlugh ibn ʿAbdullâh in 634-5/1236-7 (see Fig. 1a, no. 3).<sup>46</sup> The concept of margin measurement was maintained by this Qur'ân, that is, the tail margin is always smaller than the head margin. As in

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<sup>43</sup> Khalili, KFQ18. Déroche, *AT*, pl.51.

<sup>44</sup> CBL Ms.1449 (Arberry no. 133).

<sup>45</sup> Khalili, QUR430. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.82.

<sup>46</sup> Khalili, QUR704. See D. James, *The Master Scribes: Qur'âns of the 11th to 14th Centuries. The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art*, Vol. 2 (New York, 1992), pl.9.

the earlier example, there is evidence that trimming had taken place and it is difficult to gauge the correct original measurements. It seems that the concept of differential margins (see Ill. 1) must already have been used in this Qur'ân.

Another design type can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Harâwî, from Samarqand,<sup>47</sup> in 851/1447 (see Fig. 1b, no. 15). <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh used both the horizontal and the vertical tripartite format in his Qur'ân. The text is sandwiched between two panels at the top and bottom, as well as on the right and left sides. This design seems to have had its followers throughout the development of Qur'ânic design and even in Safavid Qur'âns. Sometimes the text block itself can be divided into three parts or panels, as compared to usual single-panel or text-block format. An example of this is clearly shown in a Qur'ân copied by Zain al-<sup>c</sup>Âbidîn ibn Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Shîrâzî, dated 888/1483, from Shîrâz<sup>48</sup> (see Fig. 1c, no. 19). This use of tripartite text panels is reminiscent of the design of the Qur'ân shown in Fig. 1a, no. 2.

Furthermore, the text block itself comprises two types of design: i). the 'hard-edge' type for the text block and ii). the 'curvilinear' type for the text block. The 'hard-edge' or rectilinear type can be further subdivided into those with two or with three horizontal panels. It is the most simple and convenient format for an artist to work with. The approach is very direct and easy to execute. An example of this can be found in the Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Sulayman ibn Muḥammad ibn Yûnus al-Warrâq, dated 669-70/1270-71, from north-west Iran<sup>49</sup>(see Fig. 1a, no. 4), and

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<sup>47</sup> Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 58.

<sup>48</sup> CBL Ms.1502 (Arberry no. 147).

<sup>49</sup> Khalili, QUR628. See James, *MS*, pl.18.

also in a Qur'ân datable ca. 1450-1500 A.D., from Herât<sup>50</sup> (see Fig. 1b, no. 16). On the other hand, the organic frame format requires more work and care in its design. There are not many Qur'âns with 'organic' frame for the text block found between the 13th and 15th centuries. This kind of frame design for the text block begins in the early part of the Timurid period. One example is a Qur'ân copied in Herât and datable ca. 1430-1550 A.D.<sup>51</sup> (see Fig. 1b, no. 14). There is also a Qur'ân copied by Yahya ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī al-Khabushani al-Khurasani, from the Umayyad Mosque, Damascus, datable 1330-1340 A.D.,<sup>52</sup> that has a similar design concept but one which was not used for the text of the Qur'ân. This Qur'ân could well be an earlier example of the use of the curvilinear frame for the text block in the Qur'ân. The curvilinear design here is very basic and not as sophisticated as in the Timurid Qur'ân.

### 3.2.2. The external decorated frame

Another feature found in this period is the external decorated frame. Its appearance can be detected as early as the 11th century A.D. An example of this can be seen in the fragments of a 7-part Qur'ân in the Khalili collection.<sup>53</sup> This design type developed in many patterns, suggesting sustained efforts on the part of the artists in experimenting with multiple possibilities of design. It is known for at least four centuries before the coming of Safavid design (see Fig. 1a, nos. 4-9 and Fig. 1b, nos.

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<sup>50</sup> Christie's, 13 October 1982, lot 121.

<sup>51</sup> Khalili, QUR642. The date of this Qur'ân is as stated by James. See James, *AT*, pl.5.

<sup>52</sup> Khalili, QUR807. See James, *MS*, pl.43.

<sup>53</sup> Khalili, QUR89a, folio15b. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.84.

10-19). In these four centuries, it was Mamlûk Qur'âns that reflected the richest usage of the frame with external decoration, for example in the form of circles, ovals, triangles and "tram lines".<sup>54</sup> These frame with external decoration were used irrespective of the *sûrahs* and their importance in the Qur'ân. There are at two major categories of decorated frames: decoration attached to the text's frame and decoration that is not attached to the text's frame.

#### **i) Decoration attached to the frame of the text**

Basically, these designs can be in either geometric or organic shape. In the geometric shape design, the most common shape is the triangle. These triangular shapes were usually placed within the fore-edge margins of both verso or recto of the page. Sometimes they can also be placed in the head margin, as shown in a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Sairafî, dated 729/1328 (see Fig. 1a, no. 6).<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the 'geometric form' usually consists of a small dome-like design, as shown in the earliest Mamlûk Qur'ân of Baybars al-Jâshnagîr, copied by Muḥammad ibn al-Wahîd and dated 704-5/1304-6, presumably in Cairo.<sup>56</sup> According to James, the illumination is the work of Sandal. By the 15th century A.D., this design type had developed into having the head, tail and fore-edge margins filled with dome-like designs (see Fig. 1b, no. 12). These two basic shapes or designs continue in Safavid Qur'âns. Such examples can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 669-670/1270-71, probably

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<sup>54</sup> James, in his book entitled *Qur'âns of the Mamlûks*, provides us with many fine examples of these external decorative designs.

<sup>55</sup> CBL Ms.1468 (Arberry no.136).

<sup>56</sup> See James, *QM*, fig.15.



from eastern Iran or northern India (see Fig. 1a, no. 4),<sup>57</sup> a Qur'ân datable 1336-1354 A.D., probably from Shîrâz (see Figs. 1a, nos. 7 and 10);<sup>58</sup> a Qur'ân copied by [Khawâjah Jalal al-Dîn] Mahmûd called Qutb al-Mughaythi al-Sultân, dated 823/1420, from Shîrâz (see Fig. 1b, no. 12);<sup>59</sup> a Qur'ân copied by Ibrâhîm Sultân ibn Shâh Rukh ibn Timur, dated 828/1424 (see Fig. 1b, no. 13);<sup>60</sup> a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Harâwî, dated 882/1477 from Samarqand, (see Fig. 1b, no. 15);<sup>61</sup> a Qur'ân from Herât, datable ca. 1450-1500 A.D. (see Fig. 1b, no. 16);<sup>62</sup> and last, but not least, in a Qur'ân copied by Zain al-<sup>c</sup>Âbidîn ibn Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Shîrâzî, dated 888/1483 (see Fig. 1c, no. 19).<sup>63</sup>

## ii) Decoration that is not attached to the frame of the text

This particular design was popular in the 13th to 15th centuries A.D. This decoration is not to be confused with the marginal decoration that is meant to indicate the number of *âyat* already recited in the Qur'ân. The purpose of this decoration is purely aesthetic. The 13th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library<sup>64</sup> (see Fig.

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<sup>57</sup> Khalili, QUR628. See James, *MS*, pl.18.

<sup>58</sup> Khalili, QUR242. See James, *MS*, pl.31.

<sup>59</sup> Khalili, QUR212. See James, *AT*, pl.4.

<sup>60</sup> Lings, *QACI*, p. 172, pl.81.

<sup>61</sup> Christie, 11 April 1989, lot 58.

<sup>62</sup> Christie's, 13 October 1982, lot 121.

<sup>63</sup> CBL Ms.1502 (Arberry No. 147).

<sup>64</sup> CBL Ms.1453 (Arberry no.132).

1a, no. 5), has a circular design at the top and bottom of the fore-edge margin. This design continues to be used in the 1336-1357 A.D. Qur'ân in the Khalili collection (see Fig. 1a, no 8).<sup>65</sup> The former consists of a central circular shape in the fore-edge margin which is attached to the text's frame whereas in the latter, it consists of rectangular design. 14th-century Qur'âns also have another design type in the decoration of the fore-edge margin. This design is just a single rectangular design painted at the centre of the fore-edge margin and not attached to the frame of the text. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abd Allâh ibn Aḥmad ibn Fazl Allâh ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Ḥamîd, dated 739/1338, from Marâgha (see Fig. 1a, no. 8),<sup>66</sup> and in a Qur'ân from Shîrâz datable ca. 1370-1400 A.D. (see Fig. 1b, no. 10).<sup>67</sup> This central design later developed into a dome-shaped or semi-circular shaped design. 15th-century Qur'ân, copied by Muḥammad Abu'l-Faṭḥ al-ʿAnsârî,<sup>68</sup> dated 847/1444, from Cairo, has this domed design at the centre plus two circular designs at the top and bottom side of its fore-edge margin. In another Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Imran al-Ḥanafî dated 869/1464 (see Fig. 1b, no. 17),<sup>69</sup> the dome-shaped designs were placed in the head and tail margins. Comparable examples can be seen in the two folios in the Khalili collection which have circular and oval design in their head margins. Déroche dated them to the 11th to 12th century A.D.<sup>70</sup> One can thus say that this decorative marginal design had already been tested in the 11th or

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<sup>65</sup> Khalili, QUR182. See James, *MS*, pl.29.

<sup>66</sup> See A. U. Pope, *Survey*, Vol. 3, p.938, pl.B.

<sup>67</sup> Khalili, QUR159. See James, *MS*, pl.33.

<sup>68</sup> James, *QB*, pl.38.

<sup>69</sup> CBL Ms.1518 (Arberry no. 140).

<sup>70</sup> Khalili, KFQ74, See Déroche, *AT*, pl.95.

12th century A.D. and was reintroduced again in the 15th century, though perhaps had remained in use in the intervening period. However this design is not popular in the following centuries.

This interesting development of decoration in the margins provided scores of model designs for the Safavid artists to tap in addition to inventing their own designs in the Qur'ân. Basically, it can be said that these designs moved from a circular shape in the 13th century to a rectangular shape in 14th-century and to a semi-circular shape in 15th-century Qur'âns. These decorative vocabularies seem to have been based on the use of unsophisticated geometric instruments.

### **3.2.3. The 'spine ruling' format**

The term 'spine ruling' refers to the extended lines at the top and bottom of the decorated block in the inner margins (see Ill. 1). This style of presentation can be seen in early 14th-century Mamlûk Qur'âns. Initially, it was merely a single blue line running right across the inner margin, which stopped at more or less 10 mm from the edge of the top and bottom page of the Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen in a Mamlûk Qur'ân from Cairo datable 1330-1350 A.D.<sup>71</sup> By the mid-14th century, such 'spine ruling' lines were extended right to the edges of the top and bottom pages of the Qur'ân.<sup>72</sup> The 'spine ruling' lines were made slightly bigger and coloured in blue as well as gold. Its presence was beginning to be felt in the overall layout of the page.

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<sup>71</sup> Khalili, QUR580. See James, *MS*, pl.42. See also James, *QM*, fig.93.

<sup>72</sup> See James, *QM*, p.188, fig.130.

This 'spine ruling' continues into the 15th century. The lines started to be given more emphasis as other decorative elements were added to the layout of the design. This device acts as a binding aid and prevent a left-hand folio being mistaken for a right-hand folio. If the page is a recto, the 'spine ruling' will be drawn on the left side of the frame margin and vice-versa if the page is a verso. A single folio (verso or recto) was presumably given to an illuminator immediately after decisions of layout had been made. While the illuminator is engrossed in his artistic endeavour, the scribe will be patiently copying down the text into the remaining folios. For example, in cases other than the illuminated text of *Sûrah* 1 or the beginning of *Sûrah* 2, close observation shows that some lines were drawn or added at a later stage to enclose the text. These lines perfectly match the corresponding folio at the centre of the book. An example of a shorter version of 'spine ruling' can be seen in a Samarqand Qur'ân dated 851/1447 (see Fig. 1b, no. 15),<sup>73</sup> and in a Qur'ân from Herât datable ca. 1450-1500 A.D. (see Fig. 1b, no. 16).<sup>74</sup> Examples of a much longer type of 'spine ruling' lines can be seen in Fig. 1b, nos. 17 and 18, and Fig. 1c, no. 19. All these examples of 15th-century Qur'âns come from centres like Samarqand, Herât, Tabrîz and Shîrâz.

### 3.2.4. The 'U-shaped' frame

It is considered rare to find a Qur'ân with a 'U-shaped' format for the text block before the 14th century. This design seems to be another product of the Mamlûk artist. The earliest example known is in a single-volume Mamlûk Qur'ân,

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<sup>73</sup> Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 58.

<sup>74</sup> Christie's, 13 October 1982, lot 121.



datable 1330-1340 A.D., from Cairo.<sup>75</sup> It can be seen as a humble beginning of the 'U-shaped' design used in later Qur'âns. The extended lines in the head margin that are drawn right to the edge of the page to form the 'U'-shape are not strongly shown. These lines are rather thin when compared to a Shîrâzî Qur'ân, datable 1336-1354 A.D. (see Fig. 1b, no. 10),<sup>76</sup> which has thicker lines forming the 'U'-shape design. The horizontal and vertical tripartite panels were still used within the 'U'-shape format here but this is not the case in the Mamlûk Qur'ân. Extra panels were added to the inner head margin. Both these examples have margin designs attached to the right-hand side of the frame, the former at the centre and the latter at the top part of the decorated block.

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<sup>75</sup> Khalili, QUR349. See James, *MS*, pl.36.

<sup>76</sup> Khalili, QUR242. See James, *MS*, pl.31.

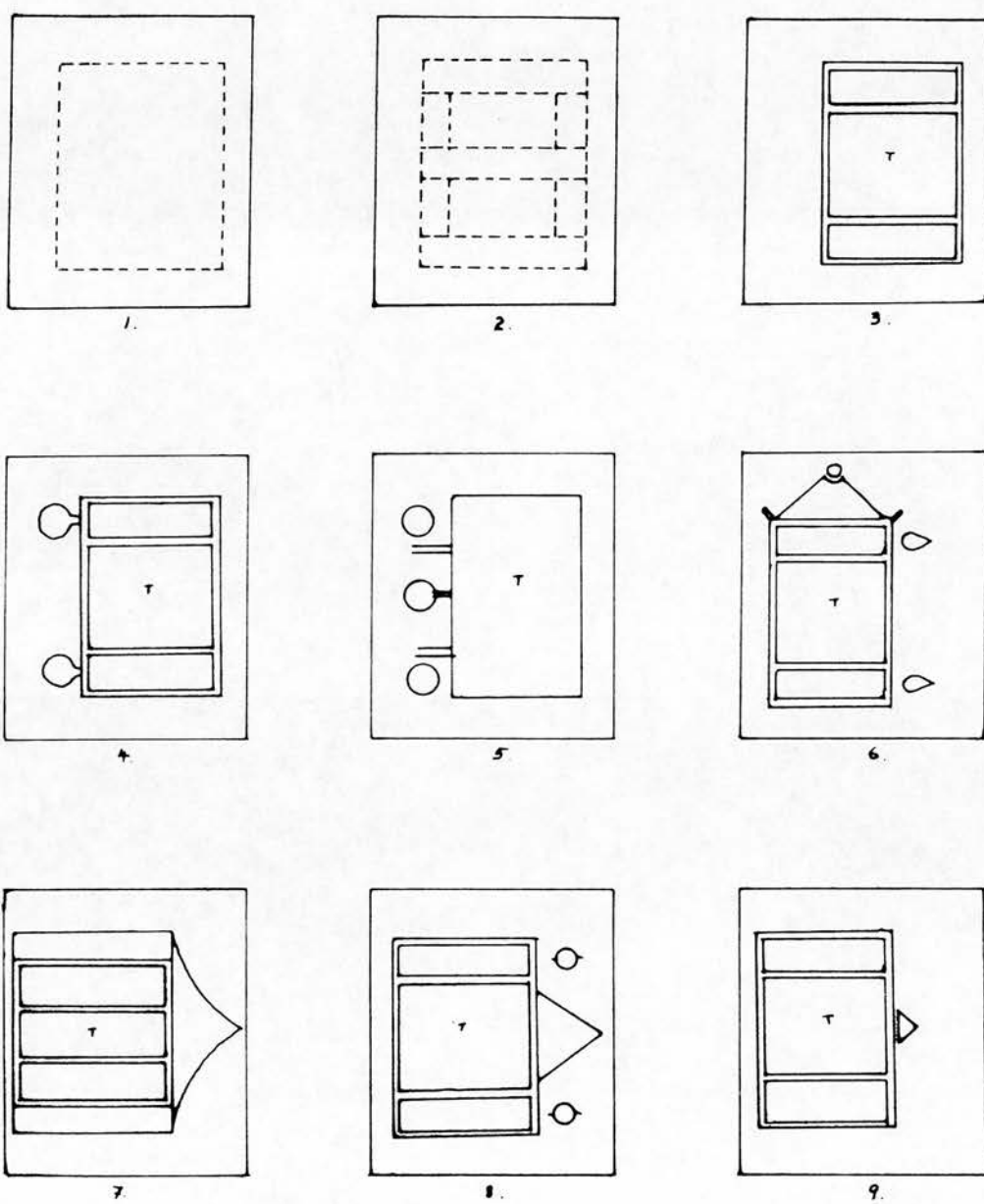


Fig. 1a, nos. 1-9. The page layout in the Qur'âns before the Safavid period.

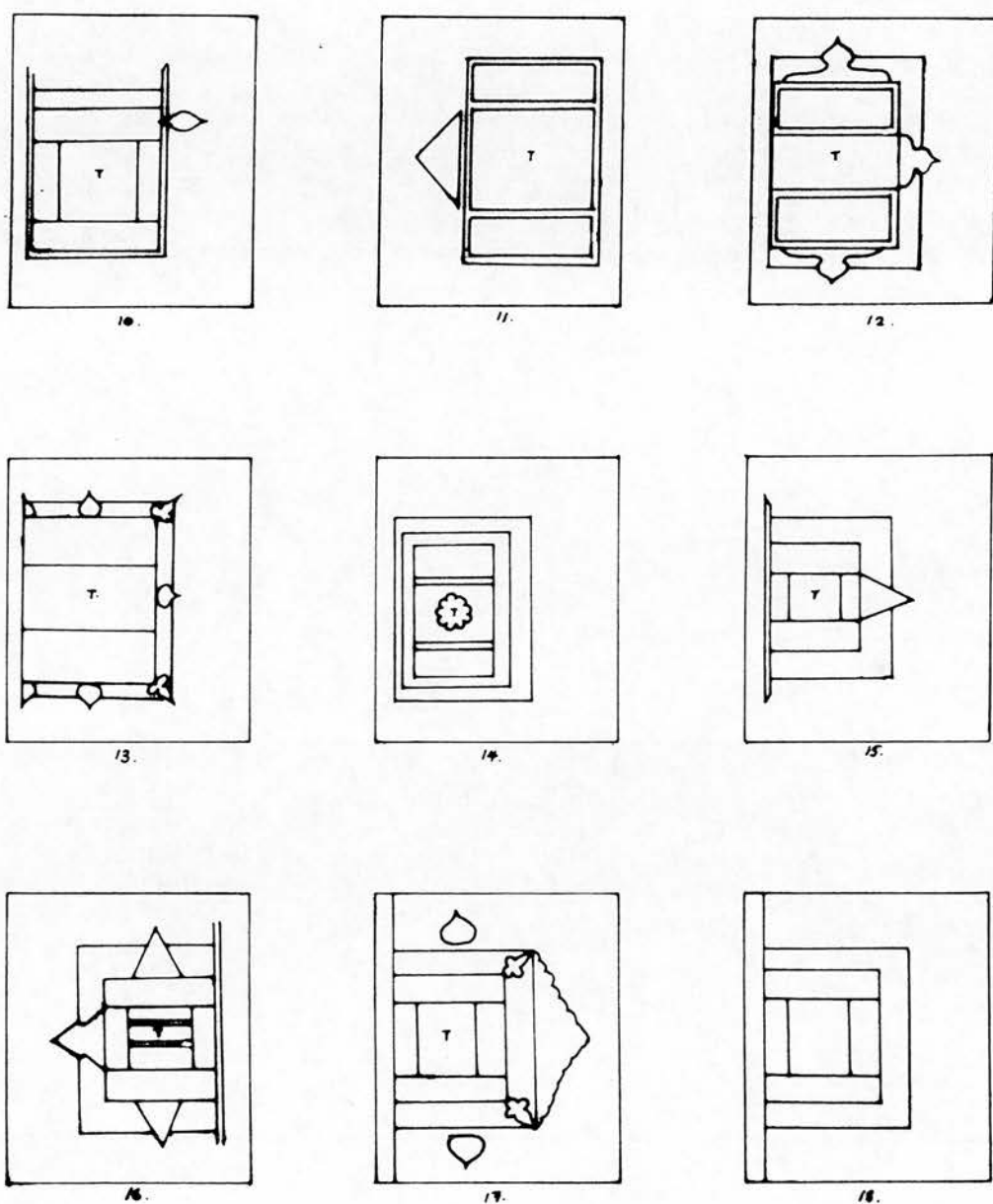


Fig. 1b, nos. 10-18. The page layout in the Qur'âns before the Safavid period.

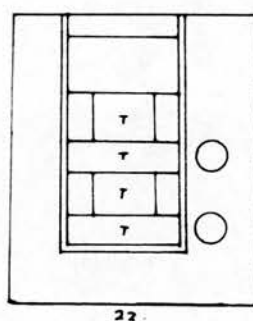
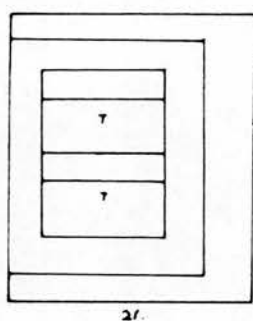
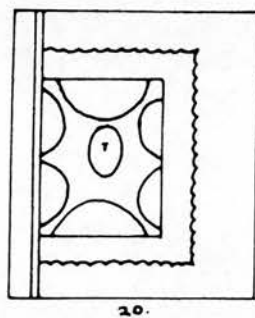
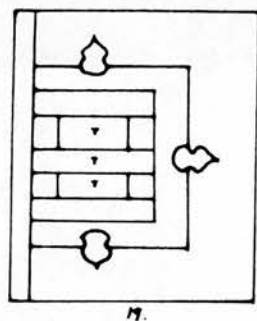
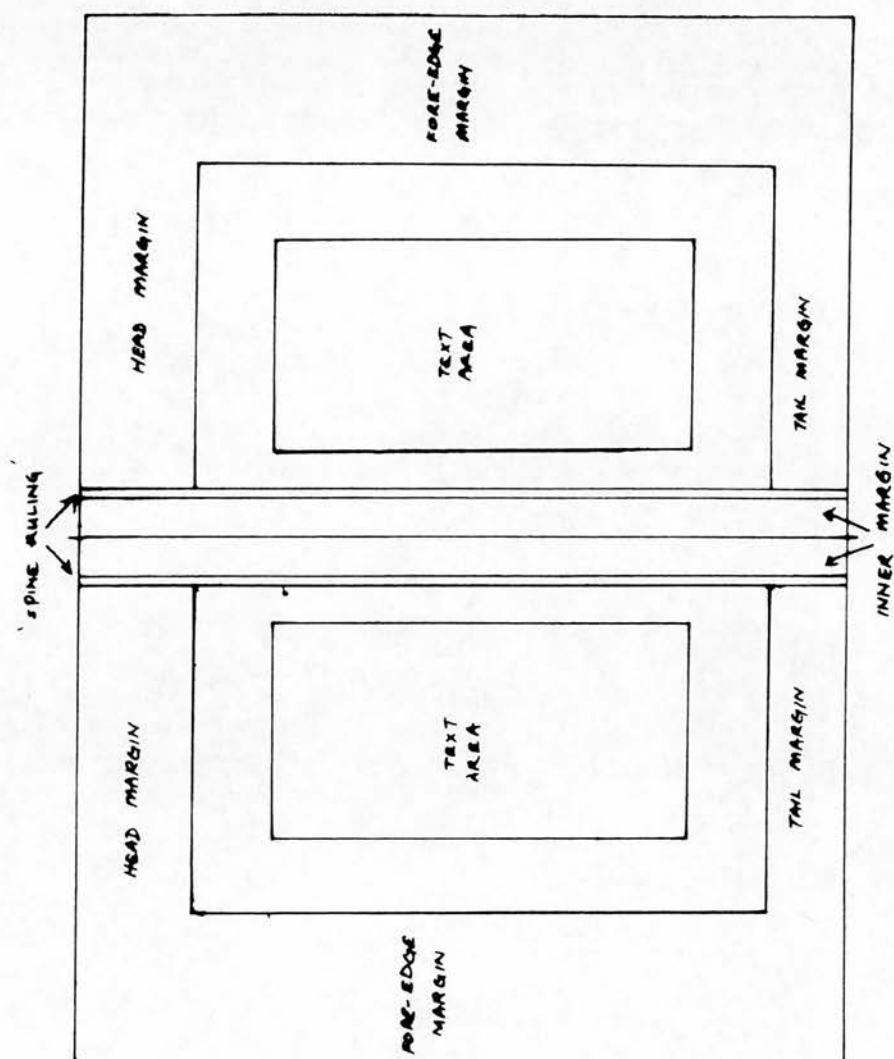


Fig. 1c, nos. 19-22. The page layout in the Qur'âns before the Safavid period.





III. 1. The layout of the Qur'an.

### 3.3 Qur'âns during the Safavid period

The tradition of page layout developed in earlier centuries continues in Safavid Qur'âns but with certain innovations. These innovative features were creatively designed with the minimum of uproar in their visual statements. The layout of Safavid Qur'âns was very subtle and "user-friendly"; its characteristics will now be assessed in turn.

#### 3.3.1. Changes in the frame

Close observation reveals that the changes in the frame format of Safavid Qur'âns were very subtle. The tradition of layout compositions was maintained but with some fusion of styles, thus resulting in the formation of a Safavid type of Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân from Herât or Tabrîz, datable ca. 1500-1550 A.D. (see Fig. 2a, no. 1).<sup>77</sup> This format has some resemblance to that of earlier Qur'âns, datable ca. 1450-1500 A.D. (see Fig. 1b, no. 16), but with slight changes at the inner head and tail margins. Everything else remains the same, except for the disappearance of triangular shapes in the inner head and tail margins that are attached to the inner text frame. These triangular shapes were suggested by the shape at the outer frame of the text as shown in Fig. 2a, no. 1, whereas in Fig. 1b, no. 16, the triangular shapes are attached to the inner frame of the text and extended beyond the outer frame. Both these Qur'âns have been attributed to the same centre. The triangular shape that forms part of the outer frame reappears in the mid-sixteenth century as shown in a Qur'ân dated 962/1554 (see Fig. 2a, no. 9),<sup>78</sup> but minus the

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<sup>77</sup> Khalili, QUR56. James, *AT*, pl.31.

<sup>78</sup> CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry no. 153).

triangular shape at the head and tail margins. The triangular shape is now placed at the fore-edge margin and not drawn from the inner frame of the text as shown in Fig. 2a, no. 1. This Qur'ân was copied by Maqṣūd <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Sharîf al-Tibrîzî al-Maftulband and illuminated by Baba al-Tibrîzî (see Fig. 2a, no. 9). All these techniques were introduced simply to create a multiple-frame effect in the composition. It is like giving elaborate framing to a painting, thus making it more precious or valuable. The text will be seen as if in enclosed multiple frames, or as if it were behind glass.

### 3.3.2. The zig-zag frame

There are three contributory factors that combine to create the zig-zag frame format of the Safavid Qur'âns. Firstly, the zig-zag frame itself. Secondly, the frame with triangular projections, and finally, the zig-zag pattern within the rectilinear text frame itself. All these designs can be traced as early as the 14th century and developed further in Safavid Qur'âns. An early zig-zag frame format for the text of the Qur'ân can be seen in the 14th-century Mamlûk Qur'âns copied by Arghûn al-Kâmilî and illuminated by Muḥammad ibn Sayf al-Dîn<sup>79</sup> (see Fig. 3, no. 10). This zig-zag pattern for the frame format is very small when compared to the zig-zag pattern of Safavid Qur'âns. As for with triangular projections frame, projecting triangular shapes, either within the decorated block or breaking the line of the external frame, had created the atmosphere for the introduction of a new design in Safavid Qur'âns. It took about 250 years before this zig-zag frame format became very prominently depicted in an illuminated Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, datable ca.1500-1550 A.D. (see Fig. 2a, no. 1) and in the Chester Beatty

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<sup>79</sup> See James, *QM*, fig.110.

Qur'ân dated 962/1554 (see Fig. 2a, no. 9).<sup>80</sup> Lastly, zig-zag patterns were depicted within the frame format.<sup>81</sup> This pattern gradually developed until it became the zig-zag frame format for the text itself. The full zig-zag framing format can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan Muhammad al-Tab'i al-Shîrâzî, dated 952-3/1545-6 (see Fig. 3, no. 2);<sup>82</sup> in a Qur'ân copied by ʿAlî Riza al-ʿAbbâsi, dated 995-6/1586-7 and made in Qazwin (see Fig. 3, no. 3);<sup>83</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Nûrallah Muḥammad al-Lahijî al-Gilânî, dated 1000/1591 (see Fig. 3, no. 4).<sup>84</sup>

In the above convention, especially so far as the text block is concerned, there are two types of format. The first consists of a curvilinear text block enclosed first in a rectilinear frame and then in a zig-zag frame. This can be seen in Fig. 3, nos. 1, 2 and 3. This style can be found in Shîrâz and Qazwin. There are some similarities between the formats of Ruzbihan (see Fig. 3, no. 2) and ʿAlî Riza al-ʿAbbâsi (see Fig. 3, no. 3). Both used a broad spine ruling in their works. This technique was already used by Zain al-ʿÂbidîn ibn Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Shîrâzî, in a Shîrâzî Qur'ân made in the late 15th century.<sup>85</sup> Comparable examples of the broad 'spine ruling' technique can also be found in secular manuscripts such as the illuminated double-page frontispiece from a lost manuscript from Herât copied for Baysunghur and datable ca. 1430 A.D.<sup>86</sup> Second type consists of the hard-edged rectilinear text block (see Fig. 3 no.

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<sup>80</sup> CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry no. 153).

<sup>81</sup> See James, *QM*, fig.141.

<sup>82</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pl.39.

<sup>83</sup> Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69.

<sup>84</sup> Sotheby's, 11 April 1988, lot 115.

<sup>85</sup> CBL Ms. 1502 (Arberry no. 147).

<sup>86</sup> CBL Ms.120. See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, fig.43.



4). In this example, a shorter 'spine ruling' was used in the inner margin. This device can also be found in the second half of the 15th century, for example in the Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Harâwî (see Fig. 1b, nos. 15 and 16).

By the 17th century, this style of curvilinear text block seems to have declined and the rectilinear text block enclosed in a zig-zag frame format seems to have come into fashion. This style can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 1069/1658 (see Fig. 3, no. 5);<sup>87</sup> in a 1084/1673 Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty library (see Fig. 3, no. 6);<sup>88</sup> in a Qur'ân copied by Ibn Mîrzâ Ibrâhîm Sayyid Aḥmad Ṭabâtabâ'i dated 1096/1684 (see Fig. 3, no. 7)<sup>89</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Hâshîm (al-Tayir) and dated 1100/1688 (see Fig. 3, no. 8).<sup>90</sup> There is also an inclination to use a narrow vertical text block in the overall layout. The two vertical panels, at the left and right hand sides of the text panel, tend to be slightly broader than the vertical panels in the earlier Qur'âns. The one's overall impression of these Qur'âns focuses on their prominent use of the zig-zag frame format, despite variants in the text block design.

Last, but not least, is the zig-zag format in an enclosed frame, as shown in the Sotheby's Qur'ân from Shîrâz datable to the second half of the 16th century<sup>91</sup> (see Fig. 3, no. 9). This enclosed frame is quite similar to the 15th-century Chester Beatty

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<sup>87</sup> Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.

<sup>88</sup> CBL Ms.1554 (Arberry no. 172).

<sup>89</sup> Sotheby's, 11 October 1982, lot 186. The name of the scribe is as stated in the Sotheby's catalogue.

<sup>90</sup> Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.

<sup>91</sup> Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191.

Qur'ân<sup>92</sup> and also to the Khalili Qur'ân from Shîrâz datable 1525-1550 A.D. (see Fig. 2a, no. 2).<sup>93</sup> This technique can also be found in a secular manuscript from Shîrâz, the *Zafarnama* of Sharaf al-Dîn ʿAlî Yazdî<sup>94</sup> dated 840/1436. Another distinct feature in this Qur'ân is the double 'spine ruling' i.e. two pairs of lines — drawn in the inner margin. The Qur'ân of Mîrzâ Aḥmad<sup>95</sup> dated 1096/1684 also uses this technique, but without the zig-zag format (see Fig. 2c, no. 4). This clearly shows either an eclectic situation in the style of the period or, perhaps, an extension of a style which originated in the same centre. Since, neither Qur'ân has an assured provenance, one might suggest Shîrâz as the centre of production.

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<sup>92</sup> CBL Ms.1500 (Arberry no. 143).

<sup>93</sup> Khalili, QUR60. See James *AT*, pl.40.

<sup>94</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, cat. no. 29.

<sup>95</sup> CBL Ms.1553 (Arberry no. 173).

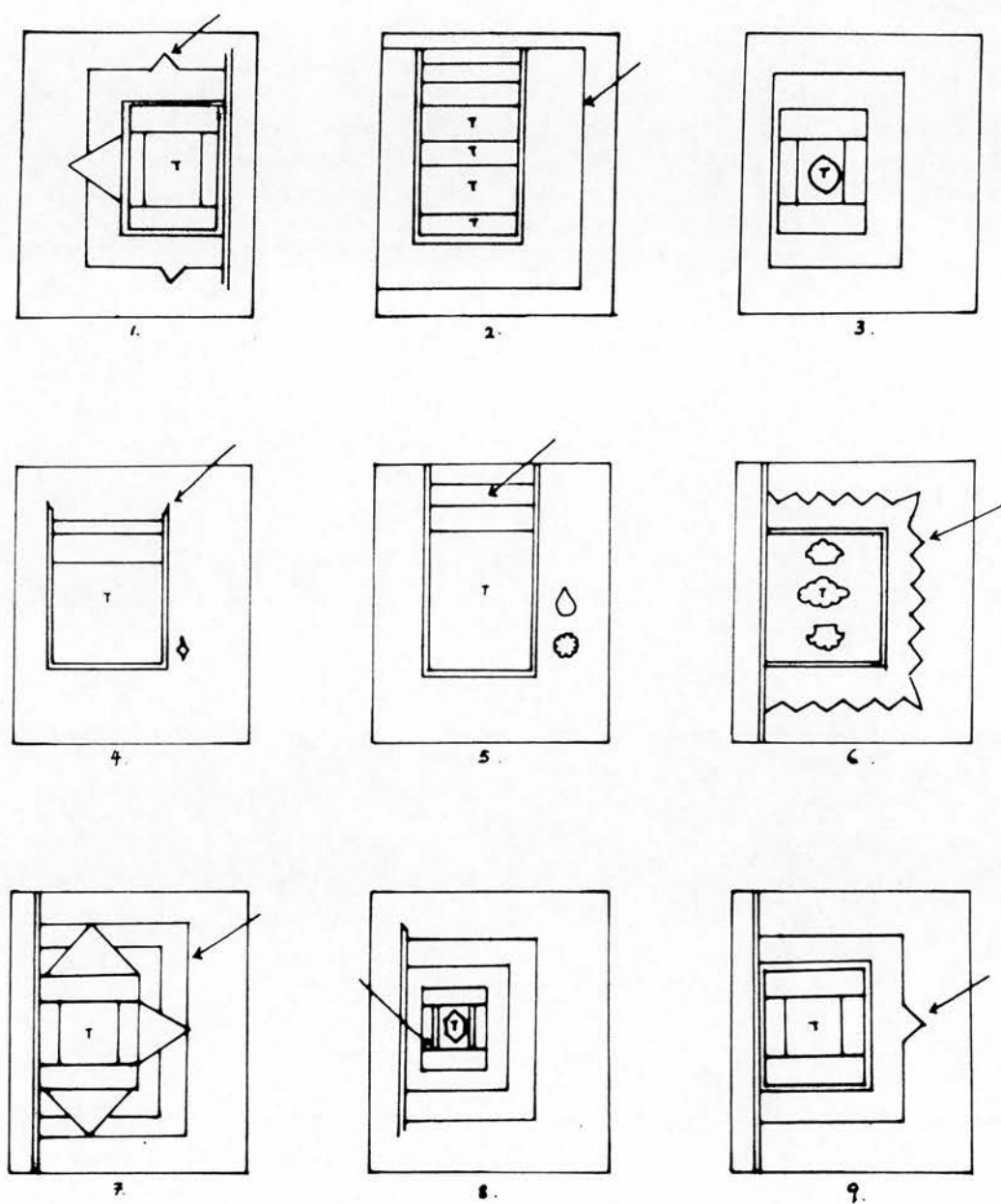


Fig. 2a, nos. 1-9. The frame format designs.

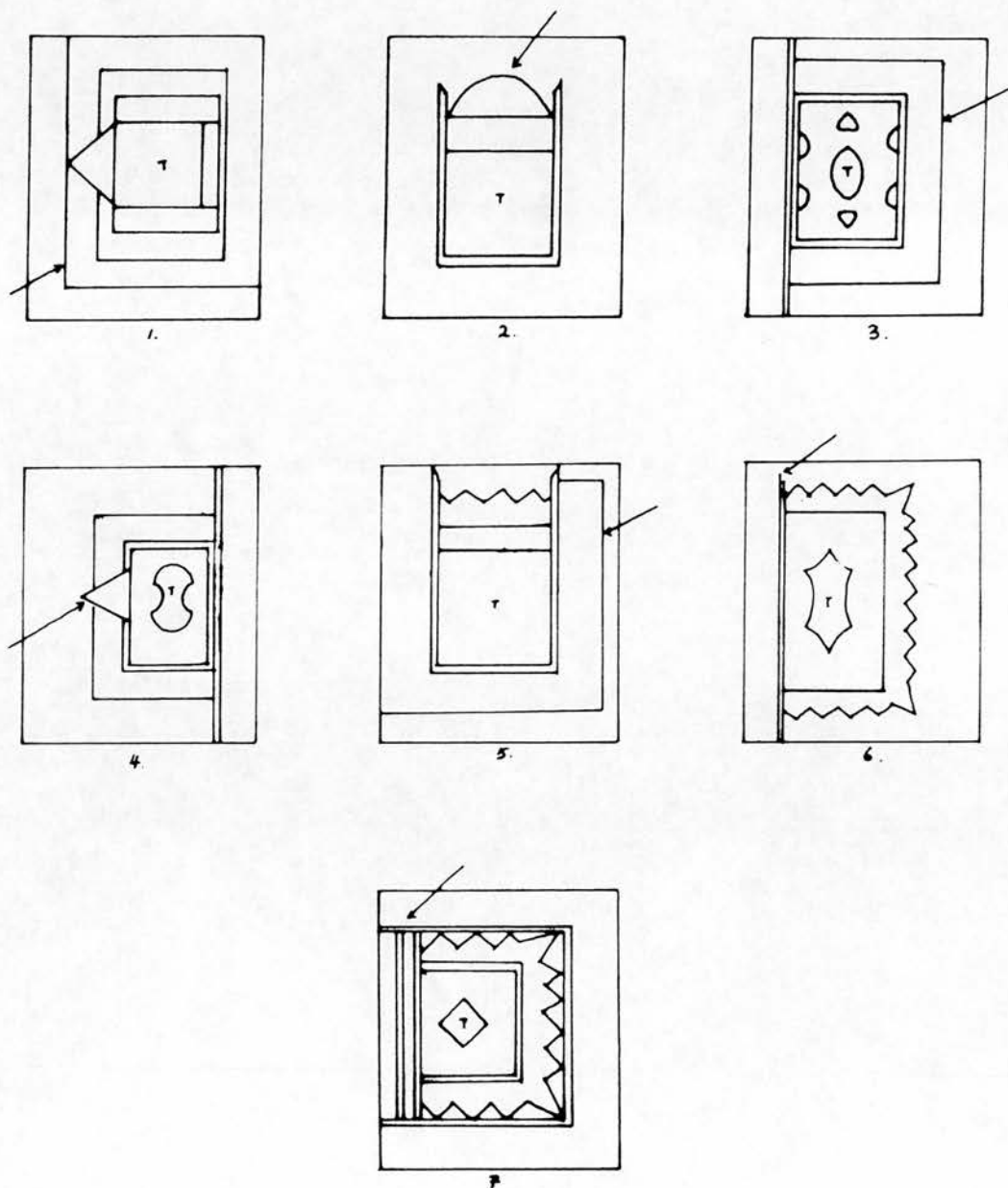


Fig. 2b, nos. 1-7. The frame format designs.

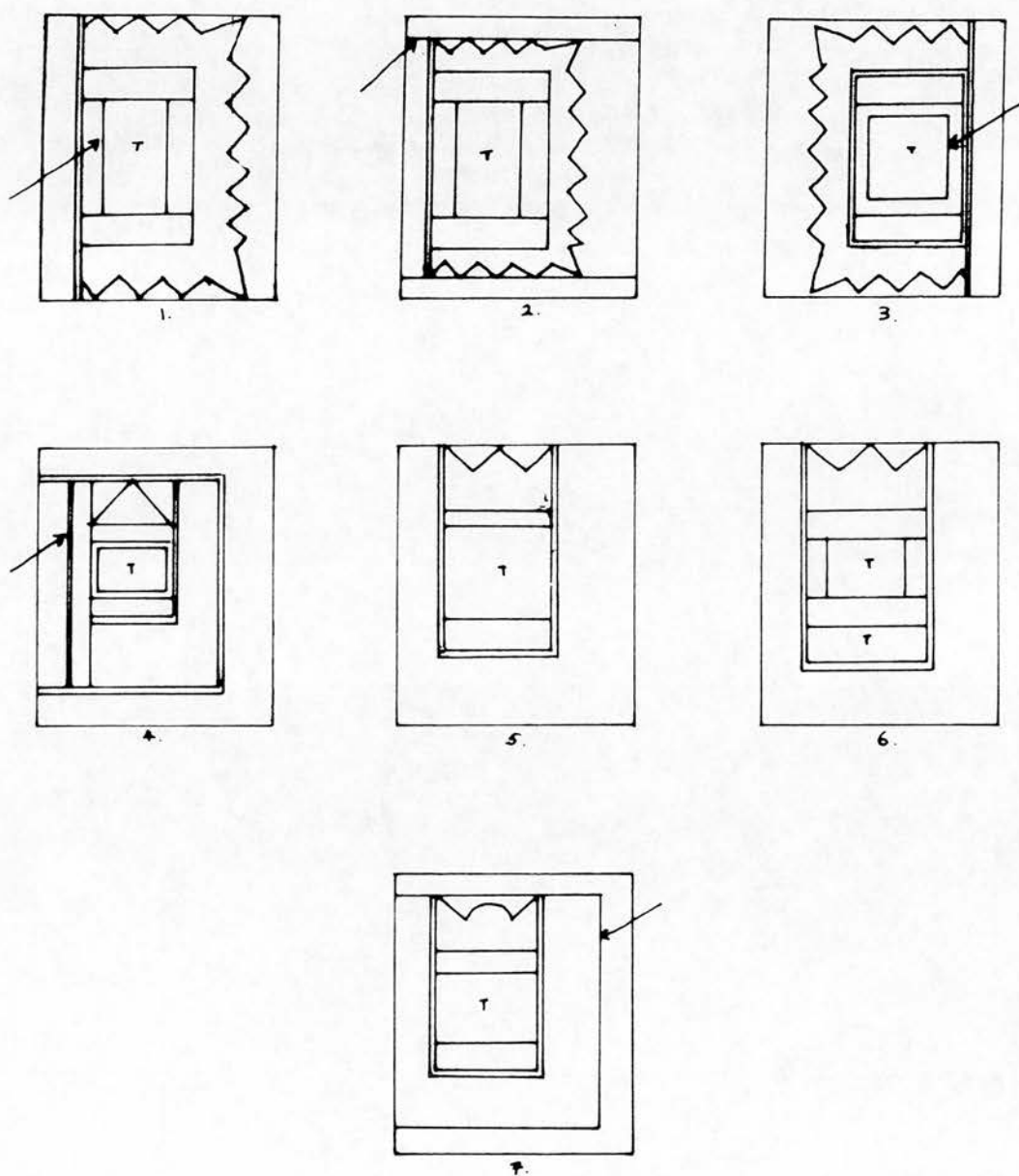
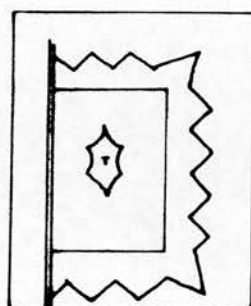
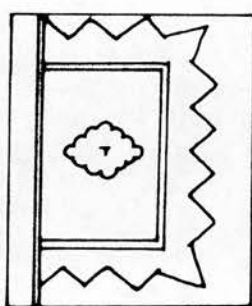


Fig. 2c, nos. 1-7. The frame format designs.

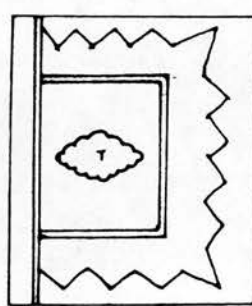




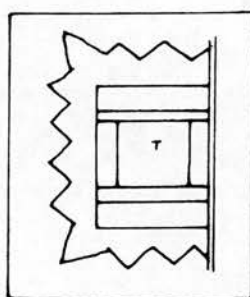
1.



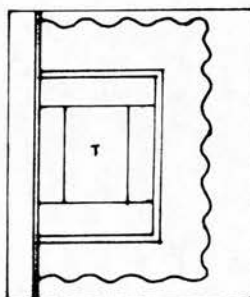
2.



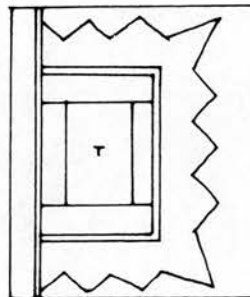
3.



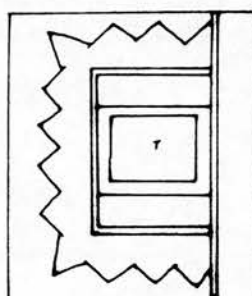
4.



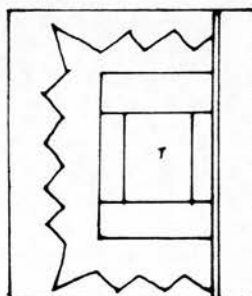
5.



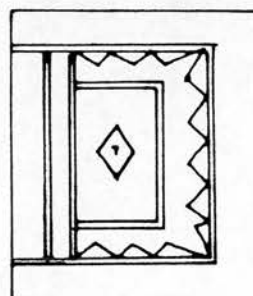
6.



7.



8.



9.

Fig. 3, nos. 1-9. The zig-zag formats.

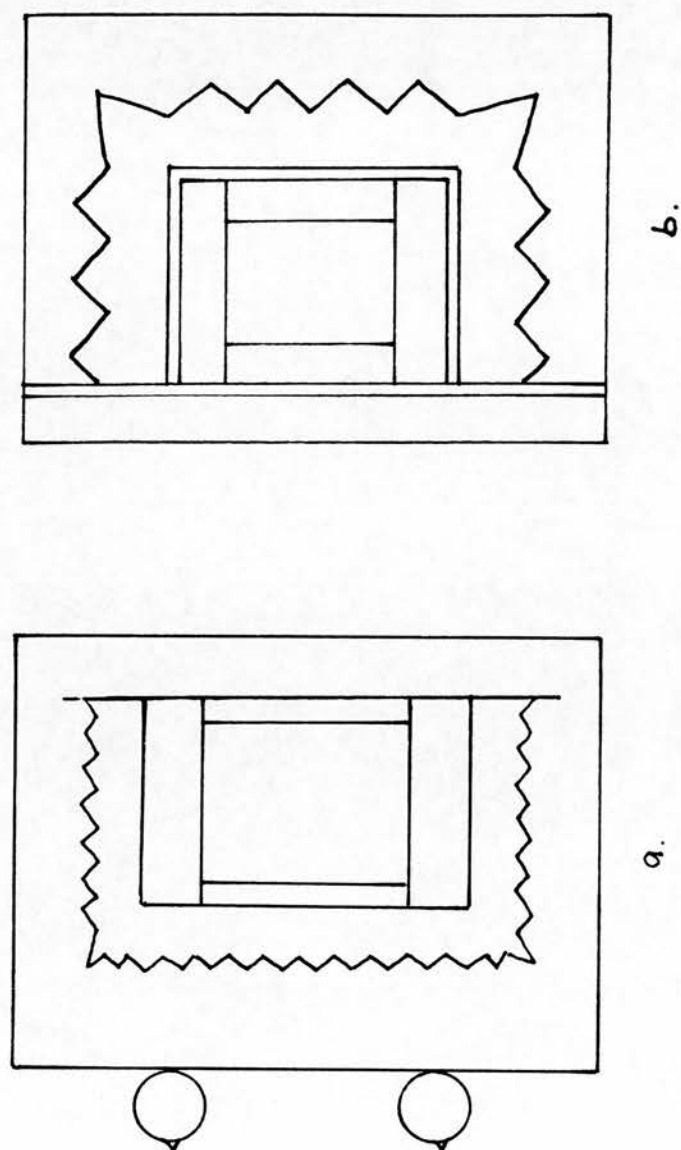


Fig. 3, no. 10. The zig-zag frames.

### 3.3.3. The 'spine ruling'

The long and short 'spine ruling' formats had already existed in the mid-15th century as shown earlier in Fig. 1b, nos. 17, 18, 19 and Fig. 1c, no. 20 (long 'spine ruling'), and also Fig. 1b, nos. 15 and 16 (short 'spine ruling'). These conventions gained momentum especially during the Safavid period. There are three types of spine ruling format used in Safavid Qur'âns.

The first is the single short 'spine ruling' as shown in a Qur'ân datable ca. 1500-1550 A.D., probably from Herât or Tabrîz (see Fig. 2a, no.1),<sup>96</sup> and in a Qur'ân dated 960/1552, probably from Shîrâz or Qazwin (see Fig. 2a, no. 8).<sup>97</sup> This technique seems to have been favoured in the first half of the 16th century and gradually ceased to flourish thereafter.<sup>98</sup> The second is the double 'spine ruling' within an enclosed frame, as shown in a Qur'ân datable to the second half of the 16th century (see Fig. 2b, no.7)<sup>99</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Mîrzâ Aḥmad, dated 1096/1684 (see Fig. 2c, no. 4).<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the double line ruling seems slightly broader as compared to other types of 'spine ruling' format. The third is the technique of using a long 'spine ruling' that touches both the top and the bottom edges of the page. This is probably the most practical device to ensure the binding in correct order

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<sup>96</sup> Khalili, QUR56. See James, *AT*, pl.31.

<sup>97</sup> Khalili, QUR729. See James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>98</sup> Based from the 23 samples of Safavid Qur'âns (see Fig. 2a, 2b and 2c), only two Qur'âns of the 16th century have used this single 'short ruling' technique and none in the 17th century.

<sup>99</sup> Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191.

<sup>100</sup> CBL Ms.1553 (Arberry no. 173).

of each illuminated written page in the Qur'ân. It also provides an estimated measurement for the inner margin on both folios for the purpose of binding. Compositionally, it gives the impression of 'backbone' to an illuminated page in the Qur'ân. This technique lasted until the end of the Safavid period. Its popularity begins in the mid-16th century as shown in a Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan Muḥammad al-Tab'i al-Shîrâzî, dated 952-3/1545-6 (see Fig. 2a, no. 6);<sup>101</sup> in a Qur'ân copied by Maqsud ʿAlî al-Sharîf al-Tibrîzî al-Maftulband, dated 962/1554 (see Fig. 2a, no. 9),<sup>102</sup> in a Qur'ân copied by (Jamâl al-Dîn) Husayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî, dated 972-3/1564-5 from Shîrâz (see Fig. 2b, no. 3)<sup>103</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Muzaffar ibn Ahmad ibn Muzaffar ibn Kamâl ibn 'Iwad ibn Muzaffar ibn Shams al-Dîn Hassan Amîrah ibn Nâsir al-Dîn Muhammad al-Tûshî, dated 972-3/1564-5 (see Fig. 2b, no. 4).<sup>104</sup> This technique continues into the 17th century in Qur'âns from different centres: for example, in a Qur'ân dated 1069/1658 (see Fig. 2c, no. 1),<sup>105</sup> in a Qur'ân dated 1084/1673 (see Fig. 2c, no. 2)<sup>106</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Ibn Mîrzâ Ibrâhîm Sayyid Aḥmad Ṭabâtaba'i, dated 1096/1684 (see Fig. 2c, no. 3).<sup>107</sup> All these examples suggest famous centres like Shîrâz and Tabrîz as the main influence for this style.

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<sup>101</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pl.39.

<sup>102</sup> CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry no. 153).

<sup>103</sup> Khalili, QUR422. See James, *AT*, pl.45.

<sup>104</sup> Khalili, QUR63. See James, *AT*, pl.50.

<sup>105</sup> Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.

<sup>106</sup> CBL Ms.1554 (Arberry no. 172).

<sup>107</sup> Sotheby's, 11 October 1982, lot 186.

### 3.3.4. The 'U-shaped' frame

This format achieves its principal popularity during the Safavid period as compared to earlier centuries.<sup>108</sup> Before the 16th century, this design was mostly given to *sûrahs* that are not from *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. But gradually, this design became apparent in the first two *sûrahs* of Safavid Qur'âns. It is an interesting beginning in the design of page layout and a significant change in the development of style in the Qur'ânic art. From examples of Qur'âns gathered, this style points to centres like Shîrâz, Qazwin, Herât and Isfâhân, which were also the major centres for the commercial production of secular books. Coincidentally, most of these Qur'âns are from Shîrâz. Possibly the impelling force for the wide spread of this style came from this centre. Ruzbihan himself came from this artistic centre in book production. Two types of 'U'-shaped frame were formulated in the Safavid period. First, the 'U'-shaped frame that begins from the edge of the page. Second, the 'U'-shaped frame in an enclosed frame.

#### i) The 'U'-shaped frame that begins from the edge of the page

In terms of composition, this is a very strong and stable format for the page layout. This is because of the impact of and the role played by empty space in the composition. There are two areas of complimentary space that created the strength of this composition. First, the 'U'-shaped space surrounding the decorated block which acted as a base that supports the painted area at the centre. Second, the topmost space within the decorated block. One is given an impression of two layered space

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<sup>108</sup> Of the 21 samples of Qur'âns produced before the 16th century, this study shows that only one Qur'ân was cited as containing this format (see Fig. 1a, 1b and 1c).



areas in the composition that is, the outer space and the inner space. The force of these two spaces, one pushing upward with the other pushing downward, also created this balanced composition. Furthermore, these two areas had created an illusion of depth in the composition. The space area within the 'U'-shaped frame recede because of the enormous 'U'-shaped space outside the decorated block.

This composition may look simple, but in actual fact, it is a calculated one and structurally ordered. The 'U'-shaped frame may start from the top edge of the page but the measurements and position of the text block still abide by the concept of page layout — the head margin is always bigger than the tail margin. This visual technique psychologically acts as a doorway into the composition of the illuminated page. There are three examples of this style as shown in the Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan dated 952-3/1545-6 from Shîrâz (see Fig. 4a, no. 5);<sup>109</sup> in a Qur'ân copied by (Jamâl al-Dîn) Husayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî dated 972-3/1564-5 (see Fig. 4b, no. 1),<sup>110</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by ʿAlî ibn Muhammad ibn Muqaddam dated 979/1571 (see Fig. 4b, no. 3).<sup>111</sup> This style can also be traced back to a 15th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty library (see Fig. 4a, no. 2).<sup>112</sup> The only difference in these examples is in the number of text panels allocated within the 'U'-shaped frame. 15th-century Qur'âns consist of multiple horizontal panels for the text, whereas the Safavid Qur'âns contain only a single panel of text. All these examples have one common feature that is, the decorated panel is always at the topmost of the 'U'-shaped frame.

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<sup>109</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pl.39.

<sup>110</sup> Khalili, QUR422. See James, *AT*, pl.45.

<sup>111</sup> Khalili, QUR625. See James, *AT*, 49.

<sup>112</sup> CBL Ms.1519 (Arberry no. 144).

The 'U-shaped' format continued to be popular amongst Safavid artists in the 17th-century. Two Qur'âns copied by Muhammad Riza al-Shîrâzî in 1096-7/1684-85<sup>113</sup> and in 1101/689<sup>114</sup> (see Fig. 4b, nos. 5 and 6), and another Qur'ân copied by Aḥmad al-Nirizî dated 1108/1696 (see Fig. 4b, no. 7)<sup>115</sup> show an inclination for more decoration in the topmost panel within the 'U'-shaped format. This decoration spread to the very edge of the page. In the designs of Ruzbihan (see Fig. 4a, no. 3) or Husayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî (see Fig. 4b, no. 1), or even ʿAlî ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqaddam (see Fig. 4b, no. 3), the decorated panels are mostly contained in the topmost horizontal panel within the 'U'-shaped frame and leave some empty space near the edge of the page. As for the text panels, Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî uses a single panel for the text but, in the case of Aḥmad al-Nirizî's Qur'ân, two panels are used. This division of text into panels had also existed earlier, as can be seen in a Qur'ân datable 15th century A.D., in Chester Beatty Library (see Fig. 4a, no. 2),<sup>116</sup> but what is interesting in this century is that both *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2, were often written on a single page using a 'U-shaped' format. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân datable ca. 1550-1600 A.D. in the Khalili collection (see Fig. 4a, no. 7).<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 72.

<sup>114</sup> Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193.

<sup>115</sup> Christie's, 16 October 1980, lot 31.

<sup>116</sup> Only the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 were written in this format. See CBL Ms. 1519.

<sup>117</sup> Khalili, QUR206. See James, *AT*, pl.48.

## ii) The 'U-shaped' format in an enclosed frame

In the first half of the 16th century, at least one Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan in 1525-1550 A.D. (see Fig. 4a, no. 3)<sup>118</sup> used this format. The 'U-shaped' block is enclosed within a fine line frame. This fine line frame begins from the top spine surrounding the 'U-shaped' block and ends at the bottom spine of the Qur'ân. There are four horizontal panels allocated for the beginning of the text of *Sûrah* 2. The two top-most horizontal panels are filled with decoration. There is a blank horizontal panel within the enclosed decorative block. It is designed simply to create breathing space within the enclosed frame format. This method of composition is similar to the 'U-shaped' format that begins at the edge of the page as already discussed (see Fig. 4a, no. 2).<sup>119</sup> The only difference is that the former shows a prominent vertical 'U-shaped' structure by means of its fore-edge, tail and inner margin in the Qur'ân, whereas in the latter, the vertical 'U-shaped' structure is enclosed within horizontal 'U-shaped' margins (see Fig. 4a, no. 3). This horizontal 'U-shaped' structure begins at the top part of the spine and ends at its bottom part. This technique works well when both *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 are written on the same folio. Visually, the vertical 'U-shaped' structure not only invites us into the text, but also creates a continuous flow of eye movement in a well-guarded horizontal 'U-shaped' structure which houses the message of the Qur'ân. Indeed, it evokes the well-preserved Tablet in Heaven (*sûrah* 85:21-22).<sup>120</sup> It must be guarded from corruption. Perhaps, symbolically, framing the text is like preserving it. Furthermore, the participation of the eye in the process of appreciation is also symbolically stated or even emphasised in the Qur'ân, in *Sûrah*

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<sup>118</sup> Khalili, QUR60. See James, *AT*, pl.40.

<sup>119</sup> CBL Ms.1519 (Arberry no. 144).

<sup>120</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, 1717.

5:86, which speaks of the joy of finding the truth.<sup>121</sup> It can be said that the concept of centrality is expressed in the visual structure of the page layout.

Another feature is the amalgamated format as shown in a Qur'ân dated ca. 1550-1600 A.D. (see Fig. 4a, no. 7)<sup>122</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmud and dated 975-6/1567-8 (see Fig. 4b, no 2).<sup>123</sup> The former has a 'U-shaped' block that is extended over the fine enclosed framed line to meet the top edge of the page. This design also consists of four horizontal text panels (marked T is Fig. 4a, no. 7), plus the decorated panel above the wavy line at the topmost part of the 'U-shaped' block. As a whole, this design employs three distinct spatial areas. The foreground consists of overlapping decorated text panels. The middle ground comprises the decorated panels within the enclosed frame. Lastly, the background area consists of the actual page margins which take the form of a narrow horizontal 'U-shaped' structure. This blank background is equally important because it strengthens the whole composition. The composition is so subtle that one tends to focus only on the decorated foreground and middle ground, thus neglecting the empty space surrounding them. As for the latter (see Fig. 4b, no. 2), there is a subtle difference: the top part of the inner margin is without the fine horizontal line joining the decorated block to the inner margin, as found in Fig. 4a, no. 7. The decorated block consists of one text panel and the rest are decorated panels. A comparable example can be seen in a secular manuscript attributed to Mîrzâ <sup>C</sup>Alî, made in Mashhad, entitled 'Outdoor Gathering' and datable ca. 1567 A.D.<sup>124</sup> The basic principle of having the subject

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

<sup>122</sup> Khalili, QUR729. See James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>123</sup> CBL Ms.1544 (Arberry no. 154).

<sup>124</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, cat. no. 66a -66c.

matter in the foreground continues to be used. In the secular manuscript, the foreground is always linked by a landscape that overflows into the middle ground. Unfortunately, this format seems gradually to have died out.

17th-century Qur'âns show some slight changes in design. For example, in the Qur'ân copied by Mîrzâ Aḥmad in 1096/1684 (see Fig. 4b, no. 4),<sup>125</sup> the overall ruling of the 'U-shaped' format is slightly broader than that of the normal Qur'ân in the earlier part of the century. Two broad spine rulings were now introduced in the Qur'ân. This design can be seen in the Sotheby's Qur'ân as shown in Fig. 2b, no. 7,<sup>126</sup> although the 'U-shaped' format was not used in this Qur'ân. Another example is in a Qur'ân copied by Mîrzâ Aḥmad dated 1096/1684 (see Fig. 4b, no. 4). Both these Qur'âns have a single text panel and not the multiple panels commonly found in the 16th century. This single panel text can also be found in the Qur'ân of Muḥammad Ibrâhîm al-Qumî dated 1111/1699 (see Fig. 4b, no 8),<sup>127</sup> but with only a single spine ruling.

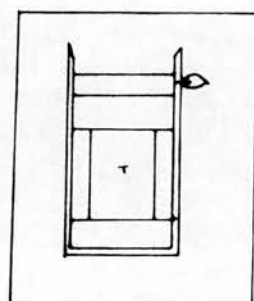
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<sup>125</sup> CBL Ms.1553 (Arberry no. 173).

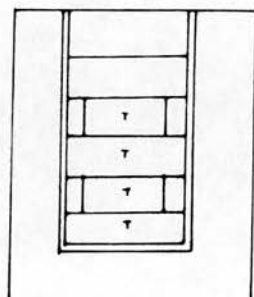
<sup>126</sup> Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191.

<sup>127</sup> Sotheby's, 1 June 1987, lot 97.

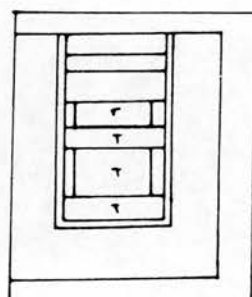




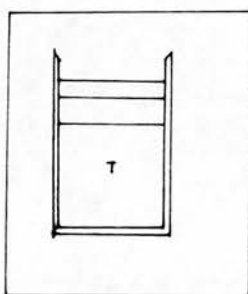
1.



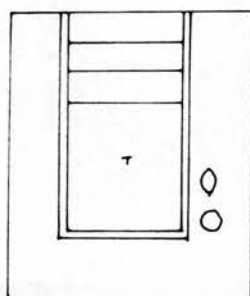
2.



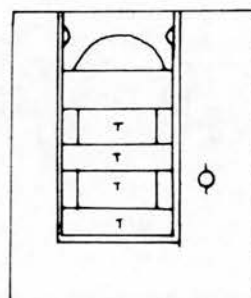
3.



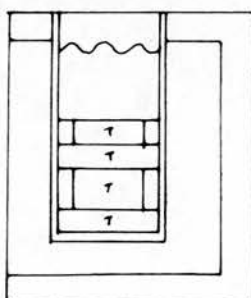
4.



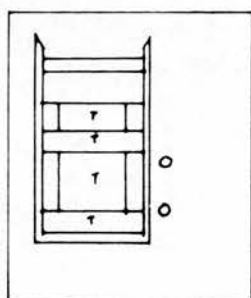
5.



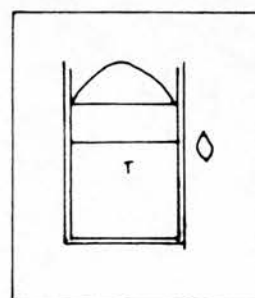
6.



7.



8.



9.

Fig. 4a, nos. 1-9. The 'U-shaped' formats.

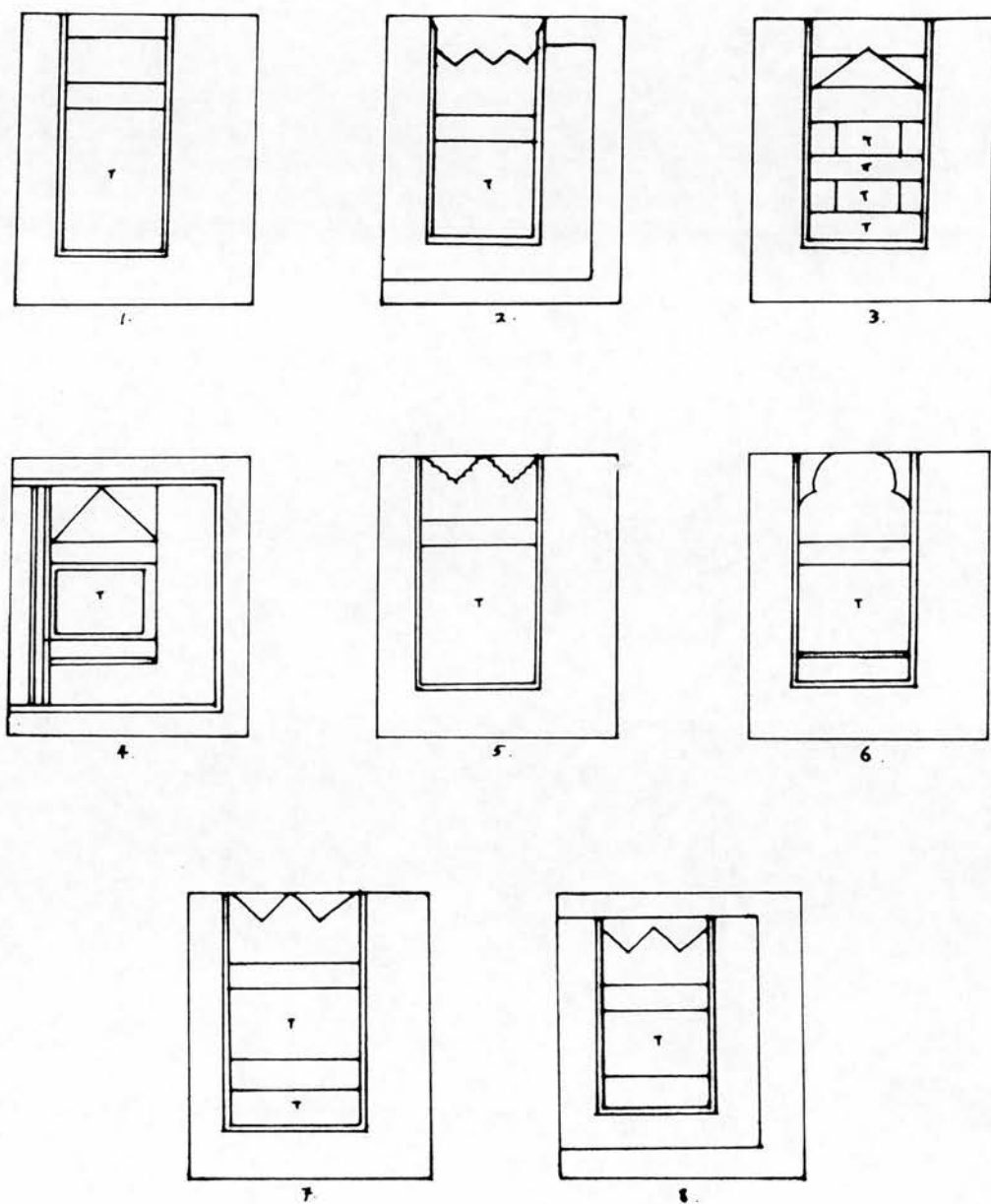


Fig. 4b, nos. 1-8. The 'U-shaped' formats.

#### 4. Preliminary conclusion

There are four different sizes of Qur'ân produced during the Safavid period. The most popular one is size 'C', followed by size 'B'. Size 'A' and size 'D' Qur'âns seem to have been less in demand. This is because they took more skill on the scribe's part. The sizes of Qur'âns may vary but the underlying aesthetic principles remain unchanged. The basic hidden principle is that the head margin is always slightly bigger than the tail margin. In some cases, the width of the fore-edge margin too was made bigger than the rest of the margins. This principle may relate to the science of ergonomic design. The sitting position of its reciter and the placement of the Qur'ân on a *rahl* both affect the actual layout of the Qur'ân. All these are inter-related, and are based on the interaction between the 'man' and the 'text'. At a higher level, they are also based on the spiritual and symbolic meaning found in the teaching of Qur'ân and the *ḥadīth*.

There are four types of format found in Qur'âns before the Safavid period. They are: the frame format; the external decorated frame format; the 'spine ruling' format; and the 'U-shaped' format. These designs became working models for Safavid artists and these later produced a better quality design for their Qur'âns. In the frame format, the triangular shape at the fore-edge margin became prominent in the mid-16th century A.D. whereas those in the head and tail margins gradually went out of fashion. On the other hand, another design, the suggestive triangular shapes format, lasted for at least fifty years or until the mid-16th century, before the introduction of a new zig-zag frame design in the Qur'ân.

This new zig-zag format of Safavid Qur'âns began in the mid-16th century and lasted until the end of the Safavid period. Thus this format lasted for about 150 years.

It can further be divided into two by means of its text block. The first format consists of a curvilinear text block or panel. The second format is that of the rectilinear text block. The former was short lived and lasted until the end of the 16th century, that is about fifty years. The latter was much more popular and survived until the end of the 17th century. The text block within this zig-zag format became much slimmer because of the two vertical decorative panels at its sides (e.g., Fig. 2c, no. 1). It is comparatively easier and faster to produce a rectilinear format than the curvilinear format for the text block.

The style of Safavid Qur'âns can also be detected by their spine ruling format. This spine ruling is present in an enclosed zig-zag frame format in the second half of the 16th century. There are two types of enclosed spine ruling format - the single spine ruling and the double spine ruling. The short spine ruling was only popular in the first half of the 16th century, whereas the long spine ruling lasted until the end of the Safavid period. The spine ruling in Safavid Qur'âns was much thicker than in earlier Qur'âns that is, about 10 mm which is twice the width of the earlier design.

Finally, the 'U-shaped' frame format was used for *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. Initially, this format was commonly found in *sûrahs* other than *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. This format survived until the end of the 17th century. The 'U-shaped' format in an enclosed frame can be found in pre-1500 A.D. Safavid Qur'âns. The Safavid artists also gradually replaced the 15th-century multiple text panels to a single text panel in their Qur'âns. On the other hand, there are also text panels which accommodated both *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 in a single folio. One distinct feature of a 'U-shaped' format is its tripartite spatial division in the layout. The text panel is in the foreground, purely decorative panels occupy the middle ground and finally the background comprises the blank surface of the folio.

Obviously, there is some parallelism in the treatment of the layout between secular manuscripts and the Qur'ân. It is unclear how this idea conventions started; the influences could come in either direction, for the same workshops of book making and with the same groups of artists would have been involved.



## **Chapter 4**

### **1 Decorative design in the predetermined areas**

#### **1.1 The *âyah*-markers**

#### **1.2 The underlying geometrical shape of the *âyah*-markers**

### **2 The *âyah*-markers in the pre-Safavid period**

#### **2.1 The letter-type design**

#### **2.2 The organic-type design**

#### **2.3 The geometric-type design**

#### **2.4 The plant-type design**

### **3. The *âyah*-markers in the Safavid period**

#### **3.1 The organic-type design**

#### **3.2 The organic-type design**

#### **3.3 The plant-type design**

*geometric*

### **4 Preliminary Conclusion**

## 1. Decorative designs in the text block

### 1.1. The *âyah*-markers

A '*nuqṭah*'<sup>1</sup> is simply a dot put at the end of a sentence. This mark was added along with other marks to facilitate reading as well as giving the correct meaning to the Qur'ân. At the beginning, when the compilation of the Qur'ân was first initiated by Abû Bakr and ʿUthmân, there were no fullstops and no vocalisation. This resulted in some dispute among the *qaris*, those charged with teaching the reading of the Qur'ân. Some improvements were made later by introducing vocalisation and other devices to facilitate reading.<sup>2</sup>

There are at least five different symbols for pausing or stopping in the reading of the Qur'ân. They are: at the end of an *Âyah* ( ۞ ); *Waqf Lâzim* ( م ); *Qif* (قف); *Waqf al-Muṭlaq* ( ط ) and *Waqf al-Jâ'iz* ( ج ).<sup>3</sup> Our interest here is the mark at the end of an *âyah* (i.e. illuminated dots or *âyah*-markers). While other reading symbols remain constant, these decorated *âyah*-markers were a focus of special interest to artists. Close examination suggests that, considering its small size, this symbol attracted much attention. One may find different patterns or motifs incorporated into these symbols or *âyah*-markers.<sup>4</sup> These decorated symbols thus add to the external aesthetic beauty of the Qur'ân.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See El-Said and Parman in his chapter on 'Arabic Calligraphy', in *Geometric*, 130; and Ersoy, *Türk*, 78.

<sup>2</sup> Ali, *Qur'ân*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Denffer, *ʿUlûm*, 174.

<sup>4</sup> Ersoy, *Türk*, 78.

<sup>5</sup> According to Ibn al-Haytham, "distance by itself produces beauty". The small design of the illuminated dot needs close examination to see the uniqueness its design and

"<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Ḥamīd said: Barren soil is something desolate. A flower garden, on the other hand, is something pretty, and when it is in bloom, its beauty is perfect. Thus a handwriting without dots and diacritical points is like barren soil. On the other hand, a handwriting that is provided with dots and diacritical points is like a garden in bloom."<sup>6</sup>

The dots functioned on at least three levels. At the first level, for sheerly practical reasons, they give a meaningful breathing space in the reading of the Qur'ān. The second level, is to give the correct meaning to the *āyah* being recited. Cognitively as well as affectively, both meaning and internal aesthetic beauty of the *āyah* is experienced. Lastly, from an artistic point of view, this decorated or illuminated dot adds beauty to the pages in the Qur'ān. According to Ibn al-Haytham, "the first things that sight perceives of the form are light and illuminated colour; anything else is perceived after the perception of illuminated colour or of pure light".<sup>7</sup> Although he was not specifically referring to the illuminated design in the Qur'ān, his findings could have provided meaningful working principles for artists. Hence, the whole concept of illuminated dots is as vital as other illuminated designs in the Qur'ān. There is a visual harmony in the totality of composition and meaning. This kind of beauty is a man-made beauty and the experience of it relates to the external aesthetic beauty of the Qur'ān. It elevates the affective mental capacity of the reader while reading the Qur'ān. These three levels unite to maximise the highest mental and spiritual experience. According to David James, "Qur'ānic illumination has a deep and concentrated power".<sup>8</sup> This is rightly so, for even though the meaning behind the

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beauty. The detailing of this illuminated dot is as important as that of other areas of the illuminated page in the Qur'ān. See Ibn al-Haytham-Sabra, *Optics*, pp.200-206.

<sup>6</sup> F. Rosenthal, "Abu Haiyan al-Tawhidi on Penmanship", *Ars Islamica* 13-14 (1948), 18.

<sup>7</sup> al-Haytham-Sabra, *Optics*, 144.

<sup>8</sup> James, *QB*, 8.

illumination and design as a whole is secondary to that of the Qur'ân, the illumination is carefully placed in order to touch the inner sense of human nature.

Illuminated dots or *âyah*-markers are of two types. First, those placed after each individual *âyah*; and secondly, those placed after groups of five or ten *âyât*.<sup>9</sup> The former is placed within the text itself and marks the end of one *âyah* and the beginning of another *âyah*. The latter is normally placed in the margin<sup>10</sup> with or without elaborate decoration. These *âyah*-markers underwent a gradual evolution of style,<sup>11</sup> from a purely utilitarian device, non-decorative, to a functional ornament<sup>12</sup> as is found in Qur'âns of the Abbasid tradition<sup>13</sup> and later.<sup>14</sup> In the Safavid period, great care was given to these little decorated *âyah*-markers placed within the text itself. Visually, they are repeating identical patterns spaced out within the text. The head of the royal library or atelier of Shâh <sup>c</sup>Abbâs, Sâdiqi Beg, in his treatise entitled 'The Canons of Painting', said that repeated identical patterns "have some magical appeal".<sup>15</sup> To put it more precisely, these illuminated *âyah*-markers are like little glittering lights floating on the surface of the text block. Furthermore, the Qur'ân repeatedly refers to itself as light<sup>16</sup> (*Sûrah* 42:52). Thus, symbolically, this illuminated

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<sup>9</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> James, *MS*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> James, in his chapter on "Qur'âns of the Safavid Period and Later", in *QB*, 76.

<sup>12</sup> Safadi, *IC*, pp.10-11.

<sup>13</sup> James, *QB*, 10. See also in Déroche, *AT*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> James, *QM*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, 179.

<sup>16</sup> Lings, *QACI*, 74.

*âyah* marker also suggests a continuous flow of this 'light' from God to mankind. Fig.1 below illustrates the size and placement of the illuminated dots within the frame of the prescribed text in a typical Safavid Qur'ân.

### 1.1.2. The underlying geometric structure of the *âyah*-markers

According to Oleg Grabar, geometry is the basic but invisible skeleton of reality.<sup>17</sup> Geometry was also one of the subjects taught in the religious education of princes in the Timurid period,<sup>18</sup> and presumably a similar system of education was also given to Safavid princes. A knowledge of geometry could easily have infiltrated into the royal ateliers since the princes themselves were ardent patrons of art. The underlying structure of illuminated dots often discloses some knowledge of geometry on the part of the artist. At least from the 13th century A.D. onwards, these illuminated dots in the Qur'ân fall into five basic geometrical shapes. These are: the square shape, the octagonal star shape; the octagonal shape; the octagonal cupped shape and the circular shape (see Fig. 2 below).

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<sup>17</sup> O. Grabar, "Architecture and Art" in *The Genius of Arab Civilization: Source of Renaissance* (Oxford, 1976), 92.

<sup>18</sup> According to Lentz and Lowry, there were three main components in the religious education given to Timurid princes: "traditional" (the Arabic alphabet, Qur'ân recitation and memorization, grammar, rhetoric); "rational" (logic, philosophy, theology, astronomy, geometry, astrology); and *tafsîr*, *hadîth*, prosody and poetry. See their chapter "The Kitabkhana and the Dissemination of the Timurid Vision" in *Timur*, pp.160-62.



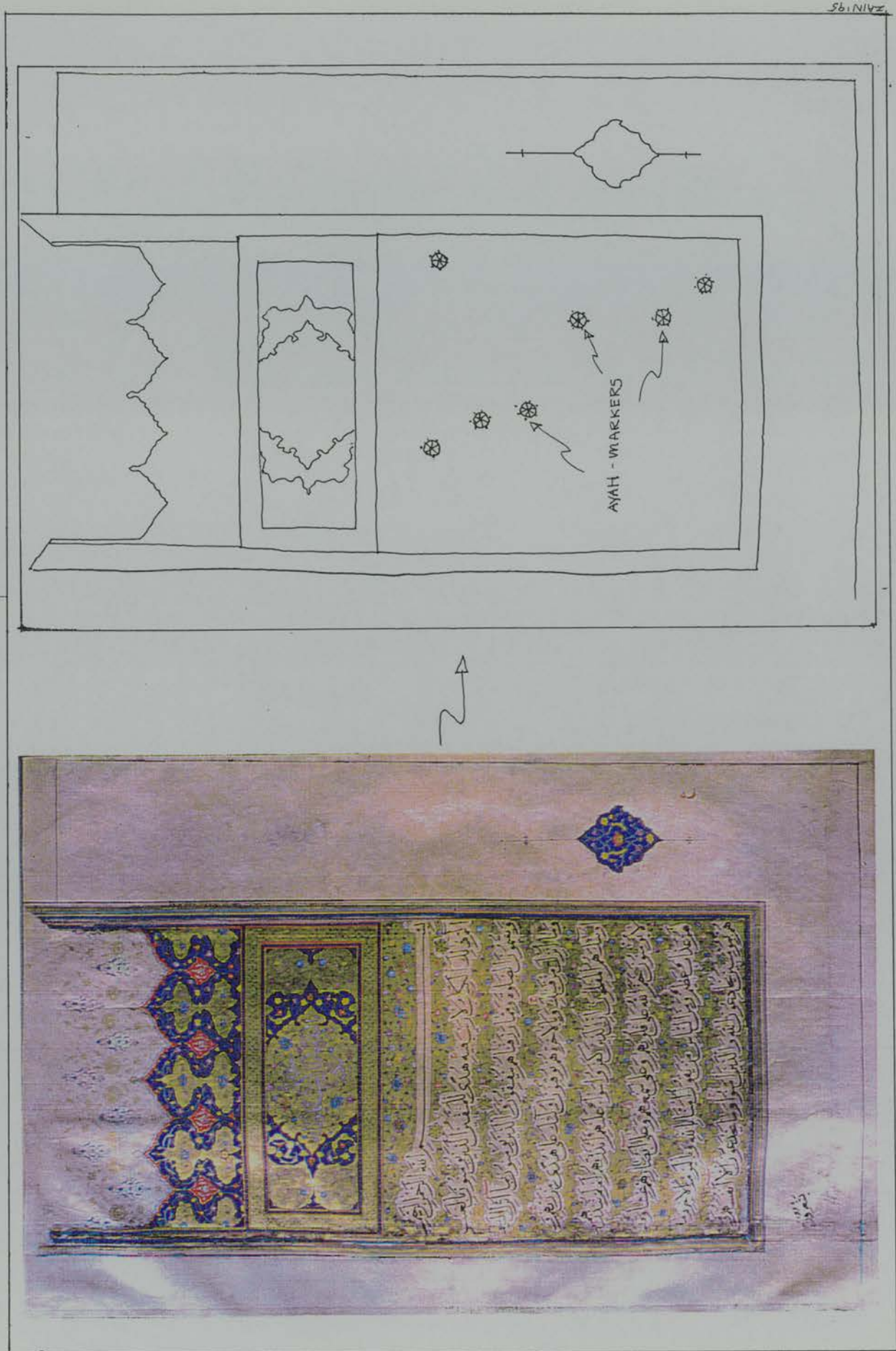


Fig. 1. *Āyah*-markers. Qur'ān. Datable 16th century A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

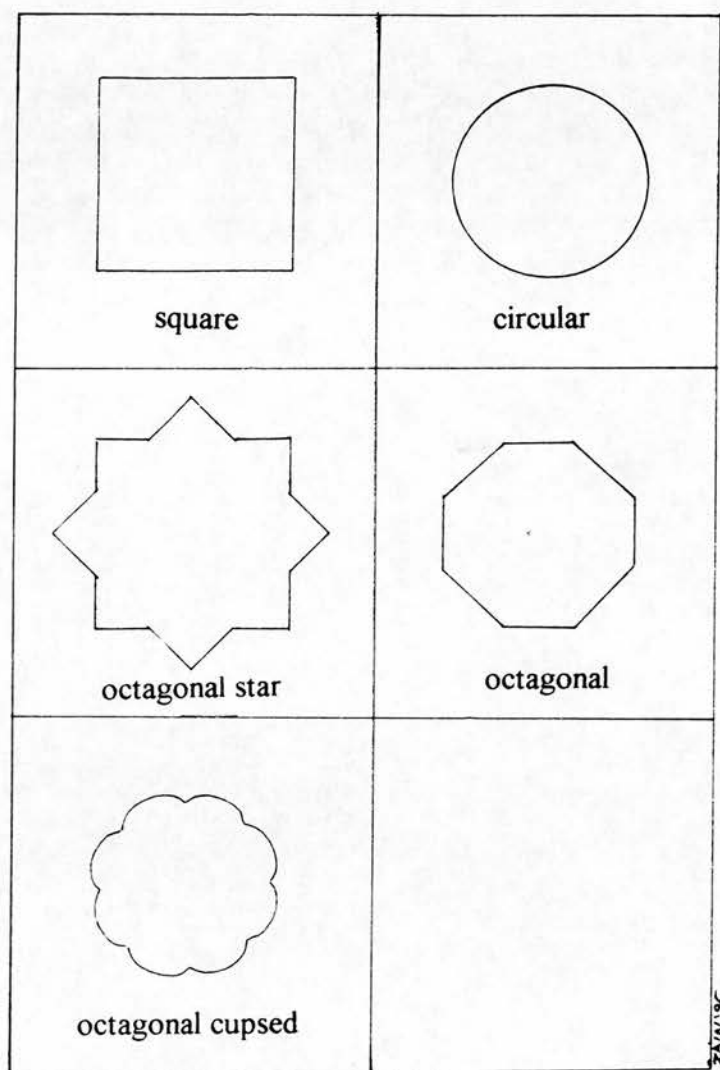


Fig. 2. Geometric shapes in architecture.

Parallels in design between different media can be found throughout Islamic art. This was probably because of the aesthetic norm set by royal library-ateliers<sup>19</sup> or by private workshops. Hence, basic geometric shapes can be found not only in the decorative arts but even in the structure of cupolas in Islamic architecture,<sup>20</sup> as in mosques and mausoleums,<sup>21</sup> in landscape architecture or gardens,<sup>22</sup> and in ceramics<sup>23</sup> and metalwork.<sup>24</sup> In architecture, the intersecting vault structures which formed these cupolas, or for that matter the painted decoration of *shamsahs*, are quite similar to the underlying geometric structure of the illuminated dots in many a Qur'ân. Many more examples can also be found in ceramics and metalwork, both before and after the Safavid period. Visually, they are almost identical (see Fig. 3a, 3b; and 3c) in their concept of geometric design. Unfortunately, there seems to be no written evidence as to the source of inspiration for the design of these dots. But visual evidence in other forms of art shows that Muslims artists had "transformed geometry into a major art form, using the circle as the basis for the generation of patterns and applying the principles of repetition, symmetry and change of scale to create a bewildering variety of effects."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, 159. See V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles* (London, 1995), pp.64 and 76.

<sup>20</sup> According to Déroche, one of the main sources of inspiration in the illuminated Qur'ân is from architectural motifs. See Déroche, *AT*, 22.

<sup>21</sup> A. B. Prochazka, *Architecture of the Islamic Cultural Sphere* (Zurich, 1986), 106.

<sup>22</sup> N. Titley and F. Wood, *Oriental Gardens* (London, 1991), 27.

<sup>23</sup> See A. Lane in *Later Islamic Pottery Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey* (London, 1957). See also V. Porter, *Islamic Tiles* (London, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> See A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World 8th-18th Centuries* (London, 1982). See also E. Atil, W. T. Chase and P. Jett, *Islamic Metalwork in The Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C., 1985) and, R. Ward, *Islamic Metalwork* (London 1993).

<sup>25</sup> See D. Jones, "The Elements of Decoration: Surface, Pattern and Light" in

Beside the parallels found in other works of art, nature could also be used as a source of inspiration for the Muslim artists.<sup>26</sup> The patterns in the illuminated dots could possibly echo those of nature. They might derive from forms found in crystallography, botany; conchology; or diatoms (see Fig. 4a, 4b; 4c and 4d) as shown by Colman in his studies on 'Nature's Harmonic Unity'.<sup>27</sup> According to him, "the eye becomes better trained under the influences of the exact study of geometry and thus the student is able more readily to recognise and more justly to appreciate the various charms of nature".<sup>28</sup> He further adds that great works of art in the past clearly show that artists were conversant with geometric principles. Such geometric principles are the skeleton of nature. Indeed, one of the assets of Persian artists was their love for the beauty of nature and gardens.<sup>29</sup> Archaeological findings and literary sources are full of descriptions of garden palaces in Iran, dating back to the Sasanian dynasty (224-651 A.D.).<sup>30</sup> The love for nature was transformed into works of art.

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*Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*, ed G. Michell, (London, 1978), 148.

<sup>26</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> See N. A. Samuel Colman, *Nature's Harmonic Unity: A Treatise on its Relation to Proportional Form*, ed. C. Arthur Coan (New York, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Titley and Wood, *Oriental*, 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.25-44.



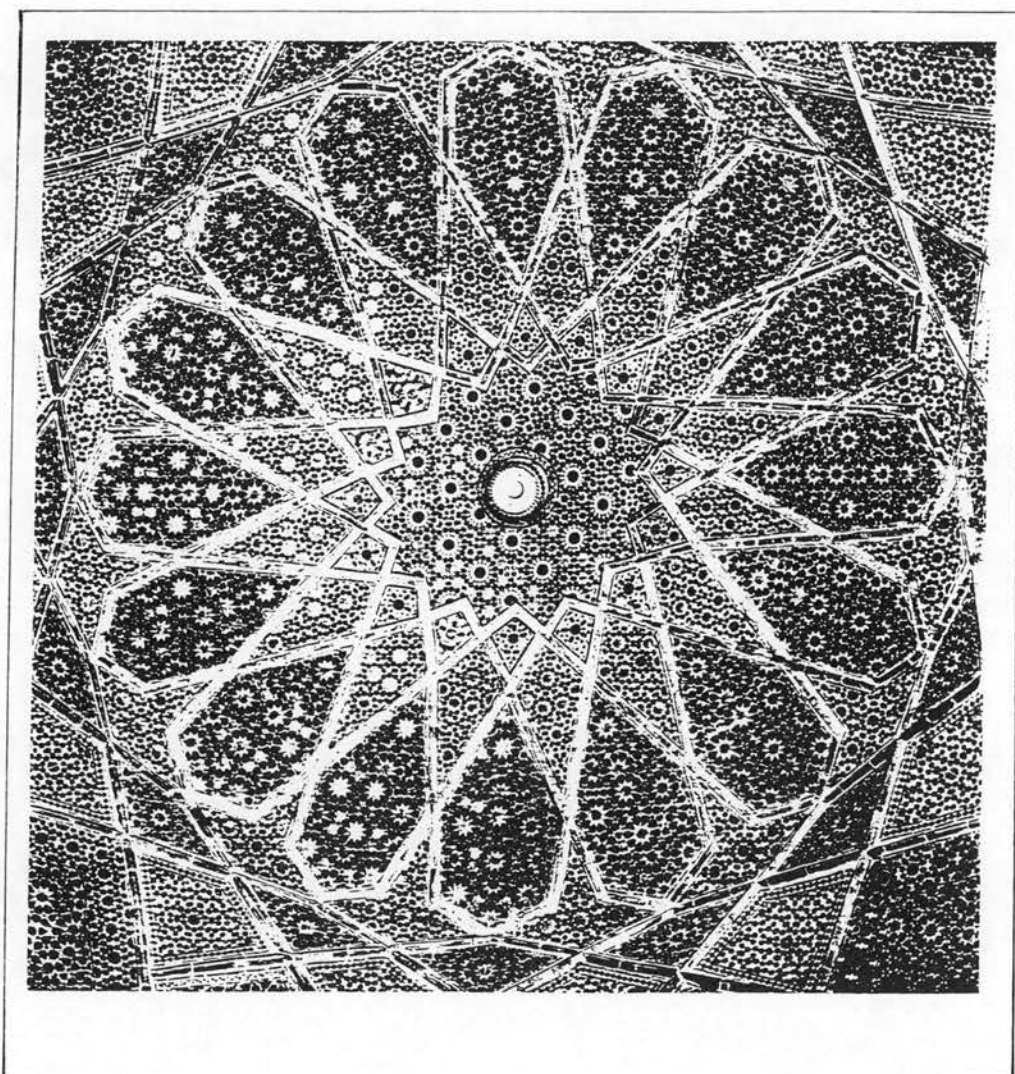


Fig. 3a. Ceiling of the tomb of Ḥâfiz at Shîrâz.



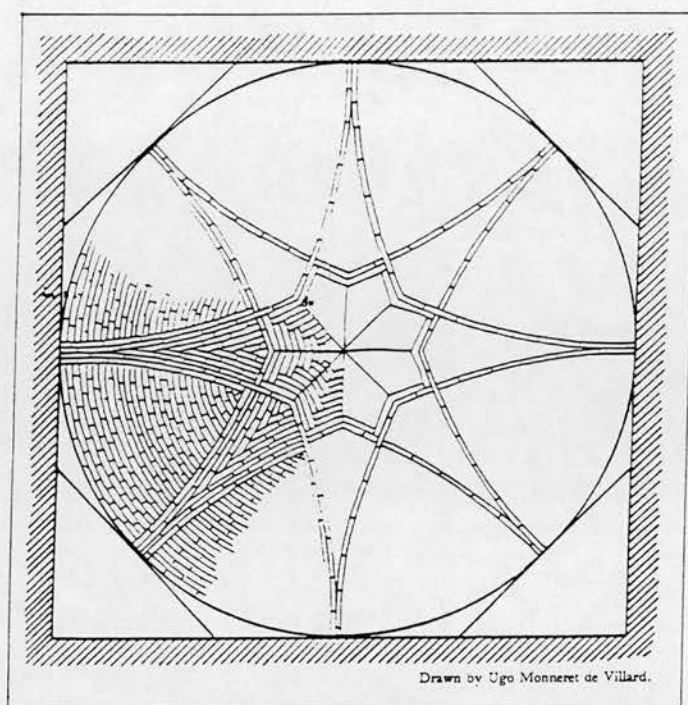


Fig. 3b. Masjed-i-Jâmi' in Isfâhân, 14th century A.D.

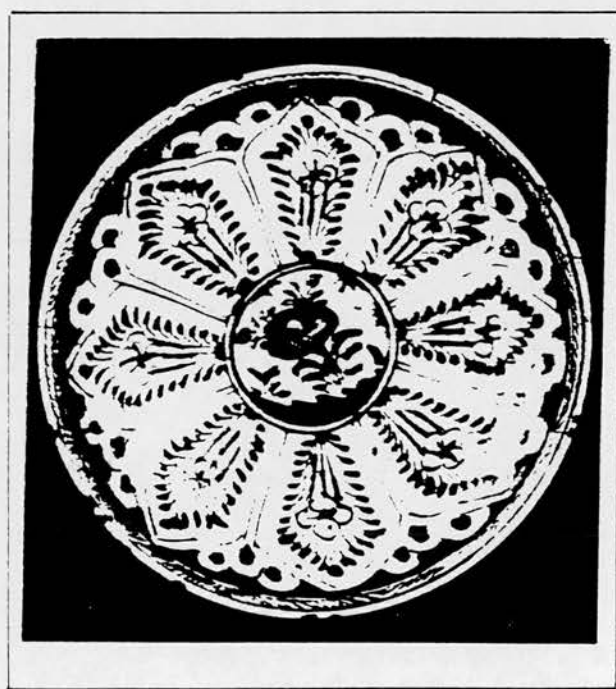


Fig. 3c. Dish, fritware, with underglaze painting in blue. Kirman. 18th century.

Possibly, then, the artist got his inspiration from nature itself. If this is the case, at least three artistic processes might be involved — an imitative process, a derivative process and finally an innovative design process based on nature.<sup>31</sup> There are some possible relationships between the design of illuminated dots and that of nature (see Fig. 4a, 4b; 4c and 4d above). These designs can be found throughout the ages and in great civilisations prior to Islam, but were charged with a specific meaning by the Muslim artist to suit his own cultural and religious needs. For example, the illuminated dots are claimed as symbols of "*shamsah*" or 'little sun';<sup>32</sup> symbolically, however, they carry a deeper meaning that, of the symbol of 'light' as described in *Sûrah al-Nûr*. But other examples also show that some of these illuminated dots are more flower-like in their design. Again, for Muslim artists, these flowers are a symbol of the garden of paradise.<sup>33</sup> The blossoming of a flower bud is due to the presence of light; therefore, the concept of 'light', as stated above, is again being depicted.

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<sup>31</sup> Indirectly, these three level of processes in creativity had already been laid down in 'The Canons of Painting' by Sâdiqi Beg in the Shâh 'Abbâs's royal library-atelier. The emphasis here was on the genre painting of animals, but the principles of creativity are the same. See Soudavar, *Art*, pp.178-179; see also, M. B. Dickson and S. C. Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1981), pp.264-65.

<sup>32</sup> Lings, *QACI*, 74

<sup>33</sup> Titley and Wood, *Oriental*, 26.

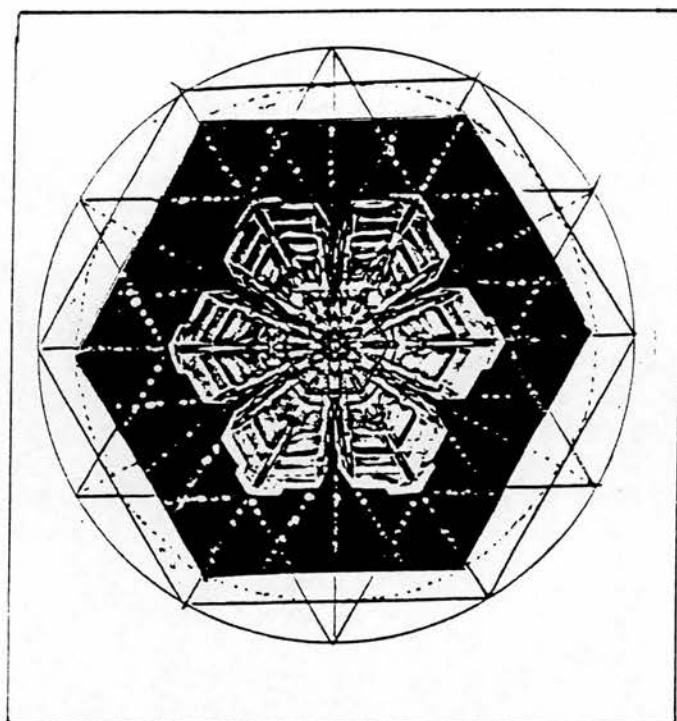


Fig. 4a. Snow crystal after Colman.

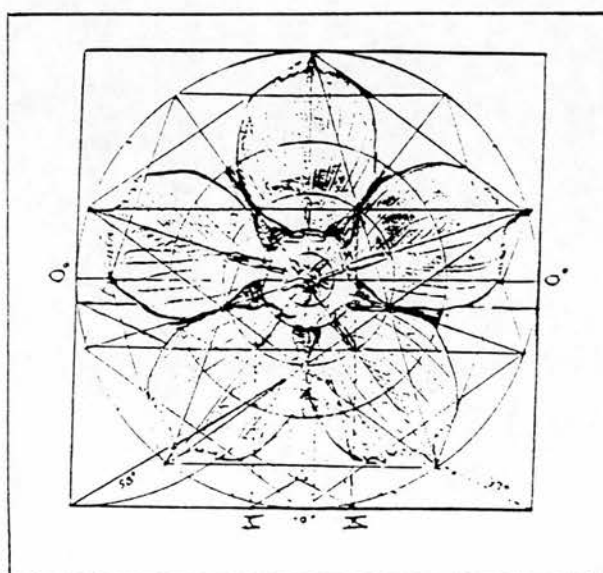


Fig. 4b. Loosetrife after Colman.

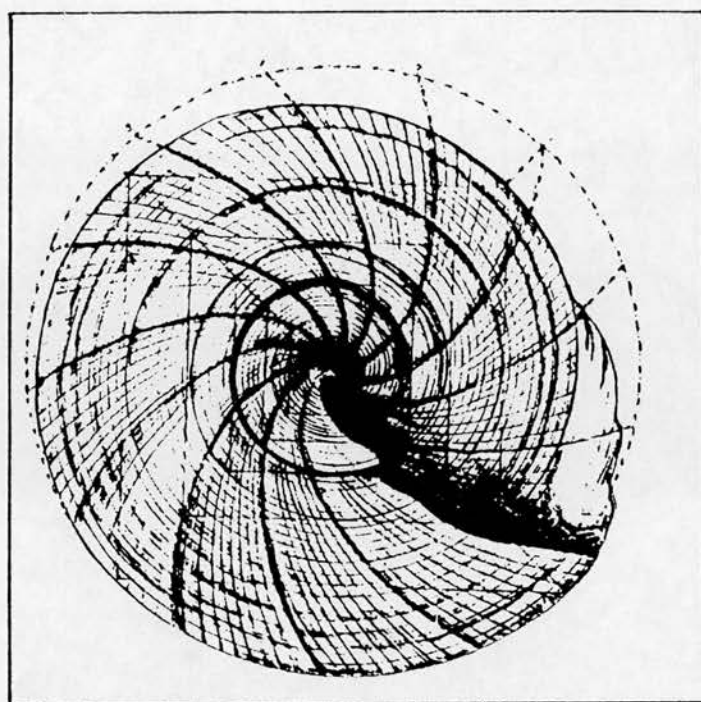


Fig. 4c. Trochus, underside after Colman.

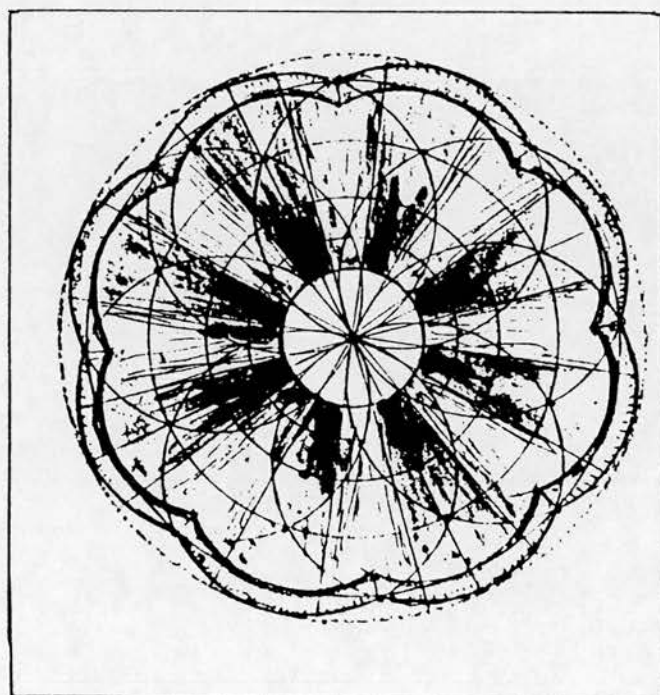


Fig. 4d. Diatom after Colman.

## 2. The *âyah*-markers in the pre-Safavid period

The illuminated Qur'âns of the pre-Safavid period give us scores of examples of what was to come in the following centuries. Much searching and experimentation<sup>34</sup> in building up visual vocabularies, a kind of 'image bank', occurred prior to the Safavid period.<sup>35</sup> Old forms and motifs are repeated and perfected by the artist.<sup>36</sup> Just to highlight a few, there are at least 34 different designs with illuminated dots which can be identified between the period of the 13th and 15th centuries A.D. (see Fig. 5a, 5b and 5c). These 34 different designs can be broadly grouped into 4 main types of designs:

- a). The letter design.
- b). The organic design.
- c). The geometric design.
- d). The plant design.

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<sup>34</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, 79.

<sup>35</sup> Timurid art had expanded its visual vocabularies by importing masters from neighbouring countries or from conquered territories. Timur himself had encouraged aesthetic growth in his empire by acquiring works of art through conquest and trade. See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, 48. See also G. Necipoglu, "Geometric Design in Timurid Architectural Practice: Thoughts on a Recently Discovered Scroll and its Late Gothic Parallels" in *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. L. Golombek and M. Subtelny (Leiden, 1992), pp.48-66.

<sup>36</sup> R. N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia: The Arabs in the East* (London, 1975), pp.175-176.



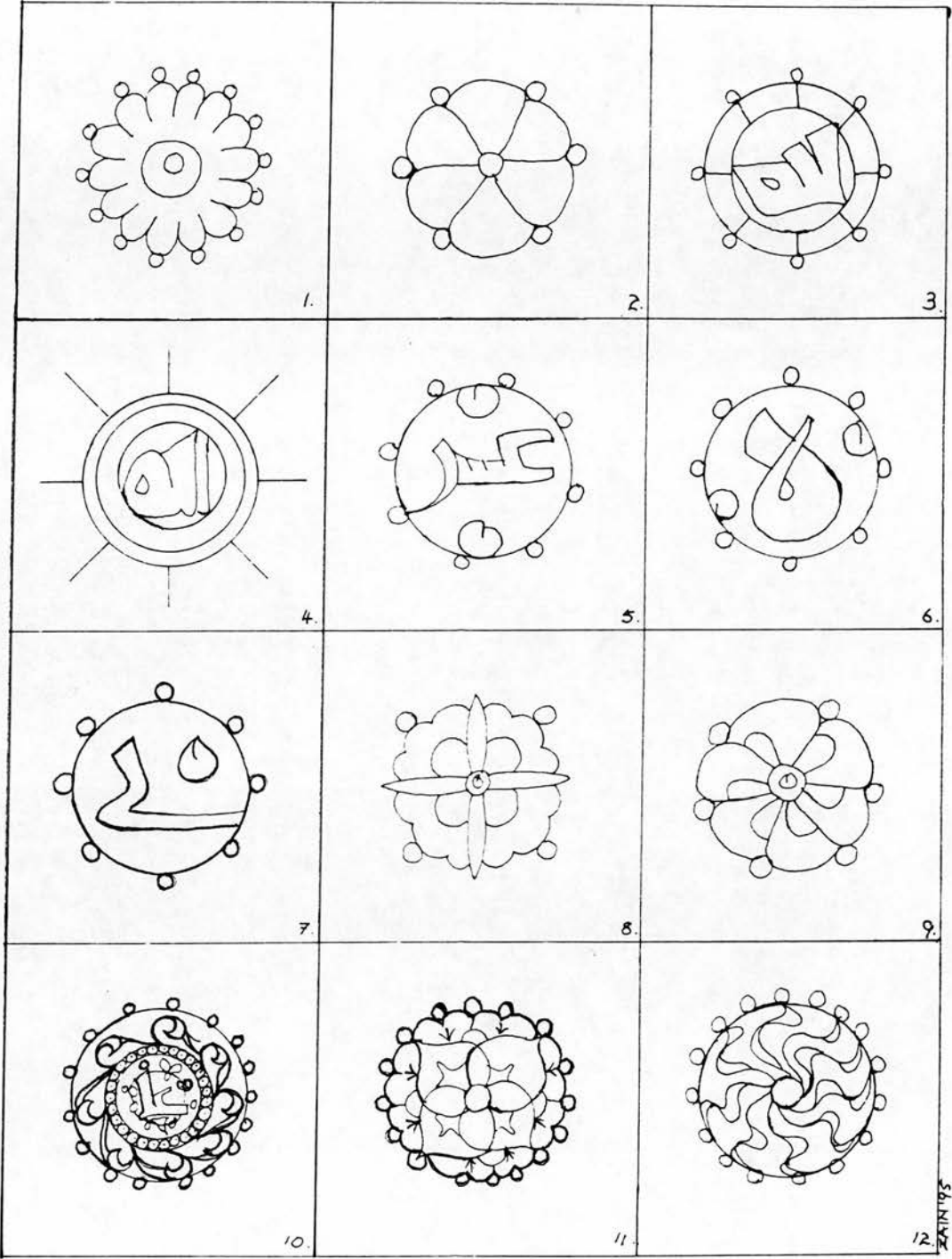


Fig. 5a. *Āyah*-markers before the Safavid period.

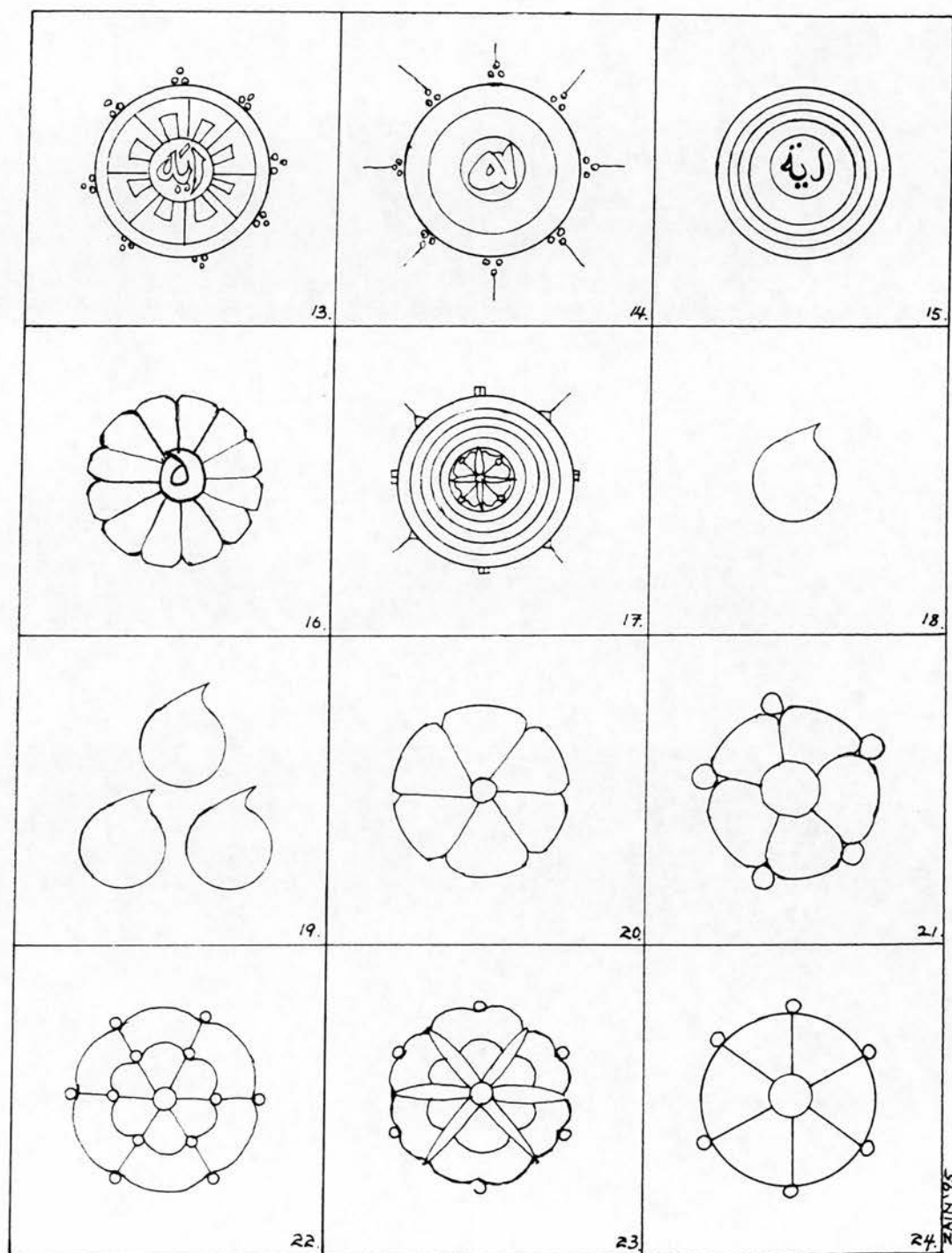


Fig. 5b. *Āyah*-markers before the Safavid period.

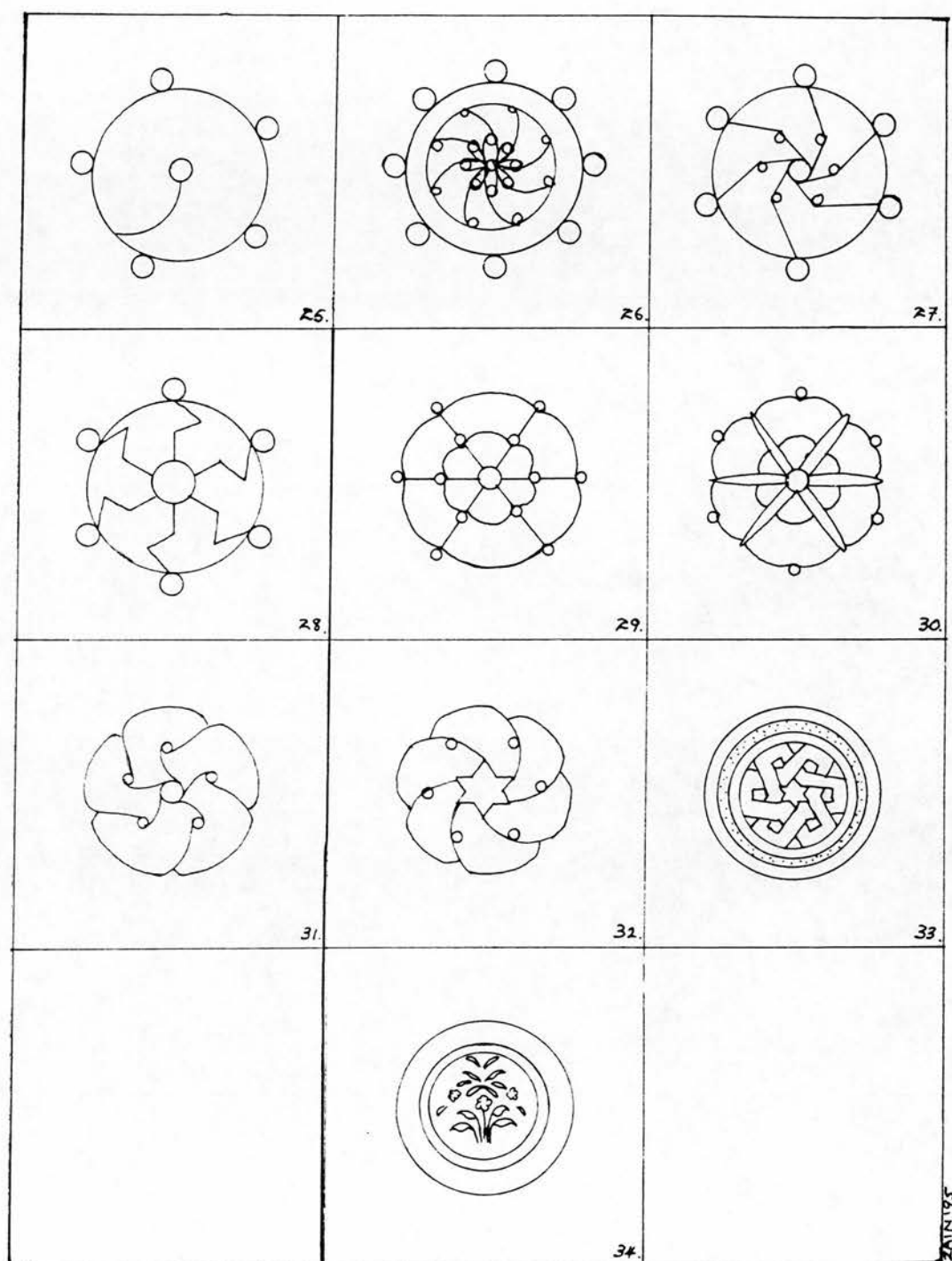


Fig. 5c. *Āyah*-markers before the Safavid period.

## 2.1. The letter design

The letter-type design comprises Arabic letters written within a rounded shape whose background is gold, making the whole marker a large illuminated dot. These letters are used to show the number of *âyat*, following the *abjad* system.<sup>37</sup> Two types occur: the five *âyat* (see no.6 in Fig. 5a) and the ten *âyat* marker(see no.5 in Fig. 5a). On the other hand, sometimes the word *âyah* itself was written within the illuminated rounded markers (see no. 3 Fig. 5a, and 13 in Fig. 5b). In some cases, these letters were simplified or even transformed<sup>38</sup> (see the centre of no. 16, in Fig. 5b).

In Fig. 5a, 5b and 5c,<sup>39</sup> there are at least five examples of this letter-type design found in the 13th-century Qur'ân as illustrated in nos. 3, 4; 5; 6; and 7. As for 14th-century illuminated Qur'âns, examples of this letter-type can be seen in nos.10; 13; 14; 15; and 16. These letter-type designs are, however, rare from the 16th century onwards. Of these ten examples nos. 3, 4; 13; 14; and 15 belong to the same group, that is with the word *âyah* written at the centre of the illuminated dot. No. 6, with the letter '*ha*' written at the centre of the illuminated dot, belongs to the type that represents the word '*khamsah*' or the number "five". Nos. 5 and 10 belong to the 'ten' type, that is with the word *ʿasharah* written within the illuminated dot. Lastly, the stylised letter type of design can be detected in no. 16. Close examination discloses the letter '*ha*', (for example in no. 16), which is purposely incorporated into the

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<sup>37</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 22.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>39</sup> Most of the examples gathered here are from published examples of Iranian Qur'âns and also from unpublished examples in the Museums and libraries of the British Isles. There are probably many more different types of design that one could detect and add to this list.

flower design of the illuminated dot. In most cases, the tendency to miss the letter 'ḥa' is great because of the overpowering decorative elements surrounding it.

## **2.2 The organic design**

The organic-type design can be described as more of an abstract flower motif. In other words, it is a flower design derived from nature. The 13th-century organic type can be seen in nos. 1, and 2 (see Fig. 5a). A slightly different type of design can be seen in nos. 11, 12 (see Fig. 5a) and 17 (see Fig. 5b), all from 14th-century illuminated Qur'âns. These are more elaborate than the 13th-century design. On the other hand, the 15th-century design, as shown in nos. 18, 19; 20; 21; 22; 23 (see Fig. 5b) and 29 (see Fig. 5c), is perhaps less elaborate. None of them has anything superfluous in its design as compared with nos. 11 or 12, both of them 14th-century designs. The organic type of no. 18, for example, is very much simpler than these earlier examples but is a visually powerful design. nos. 22 or 23, for their part, owe their symmetrical design to nature.

## **2.3 The geometric design**

This type of design can be found abundantly in the illuminated Qur'âns of the 15th century onwards. nos. 24 (see Fig. 5b), 25, 26; 27; 28; 31; 32 and 33 (see Fig. 5c), are some examples of this geometric design. All these designs reflect some innovation on the part of the artists. They move from a design derivative of nature (in the earlier centuries) to an innovative design involving small dots joined by lines. By using geometry in their design, the artist allows more room for experimentation.



Indeed, this experimentation can be clearly seen in the overall structure of the illuminated Qur'âns in the Safavid period. All these designs are refined and settled comfortably and without intrusion or visual disturbance into the overall decorative design of the text block.

## **2.4 The plant design**

The plant design is actually an abstract depiction of nature drawn at the centre of the illuminated dot. This type of design is commonly found in 15th-century illuminated Qur'âns. no. 34 in Fig. 5c, is an example. It comprises a minutely drawn flower motif with leaves, in a frontal depiction. Elements of symmetry or balance are still maintained in such plant designs.

## **3. Âyah-markers in the Safavid period**

Muḥammad Haydar Dughlat (a Chaghatayid prince), in his writings about painting, revealed the importance of design, repetition, and refinement in the first half of the 16th century.<sup>40</sup> His writings may reflect a similar mode of expression in other forms of art. Since it is highly probable that the same artist could also have produced religious art, one might expect to find similar concepts in the design of illuminated Qur'âns.

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<sup>40</sup> Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, 169.

The *âyah*-markers in illuminated Qur'âns of the Safavid period (see Figs. 6a, 6b and 6c), echo design formulae from earlier periods. One feature that lost its popularity was the letter design in *âyah*-markers. This design was very popular in the 13th and 14th century. Unfortunately, what caused diminishing interest in this letter design is not known. Presumably it was no longer felt necessary to include writing in *âyah*-markers at that time. Or perhaps these *âyah*-markers were already widely understood. Thus a simple design of *âyah*-marker was now sufficient to aid the reader. Furthermore, for the practical reason of its small size,<sup>41</sup> the new diminutive *âyah*-marker could not accommodate Arabic letters easily. It was a challenge to the artists to device a motif, that was widely accepted by his audience and was aesthetically pleasing. The most popular solutions were the organic design, the geometric design, and the plant design. Thus, variants of these design types were invented for *âyah*-markers, as shown in Figs. 6a, 6b and 6c below.

### 3.1 The organic design

In the organic design, at least three different patterns surfaced in the Safavid period. These three differences are very subtle and only noticeable under close examination.<sup>42</sup> The individuality and uniqueness of these *âyah*-markers will not be registered simply by glancing through illuminated pages of the Qur'ân. They can be seen by focusing at the very centre of the *âyah*-markers. They are as follows:

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<sup>41</sup> Fig. 1 illustrates the size and the position of illuminated dots in the text block of a single page of the Qur'ân.

<sup>42</sup> The differences in design were discovered through a very slow process of individually examining the *âyah*-markers by means of a magnifying glass.

- a). Type A : Without a small circle at the centre of the *âyah*-markers.
- b). Type B : With a small circle at the centre of the *âyah*-markers.
- c). Type C : With a slightly bigger circle at the centre of the *âyah*-markers.

### 3.1.1 Type A

Type A can be seen in nos. 1, 2; 3 and 4, in Fig. 6a. In these four examples, there are four, five, six or eight converging lines from the edge of the petal-like circle to the centre of the *âyah*-marker. In between these converging lines are patterns which also concentrate at the centre of the *âyah*-markers. No. 2 and no. 4 comprises small circles drawn at the edge of the petals. These designs derive from nature — a flower shape with four, five or six petals.

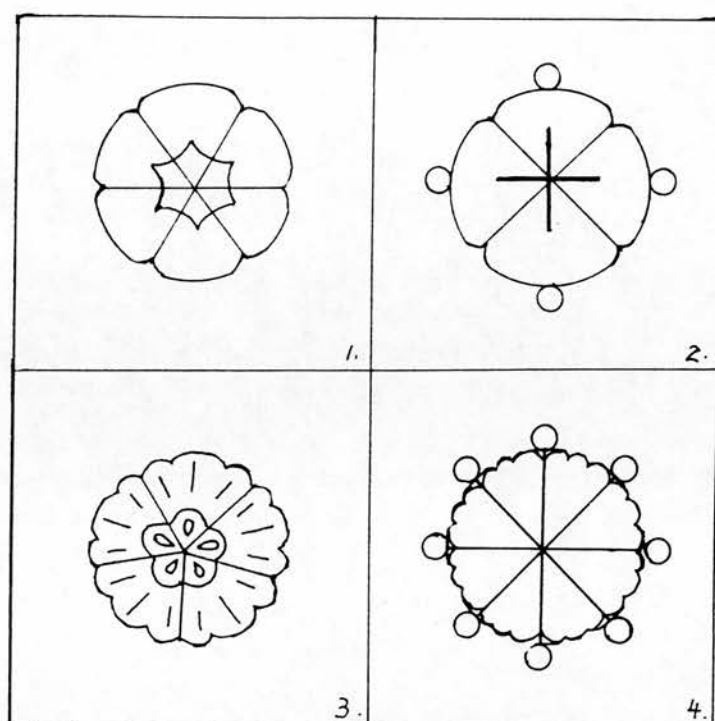


Fig. 6a.

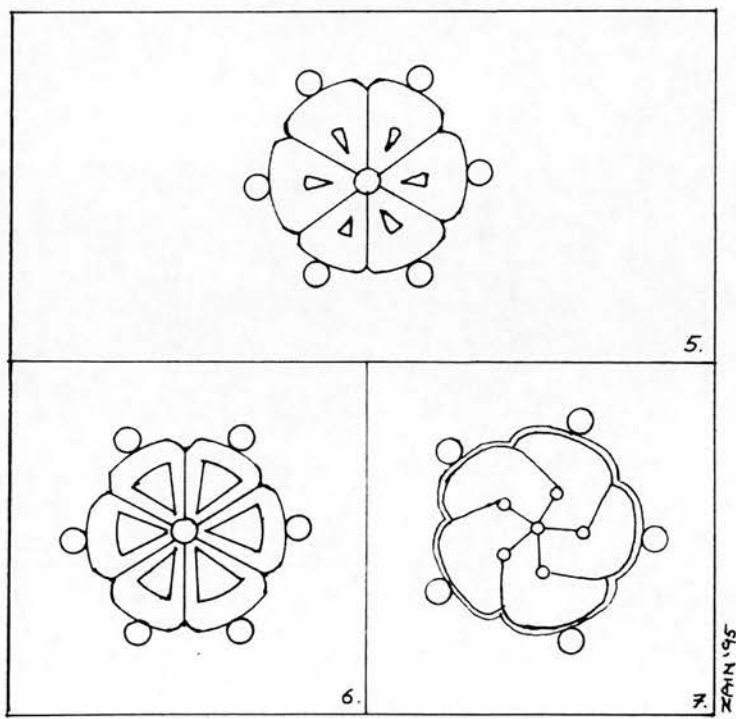


Fig. 6b(i).

Figs. 6a and 6b(i). The Safavid *āyah*-markers.

### 3.1.2. Type B

In the Type B design, four, five or six converging lines can also be found; these meet at the small circle at the centre. At least eleven different designs of *âyah*-markers have been identified. Examples of these can be seen in three groups as illustrated in Fig. 6b(i), Fig. 6b(ii) and Fig. 6b(iii). Firstly, in Fig. 6b(i), no. 5 and no. 6 have six lines converging towards the inner circle at the centre. On the other hand, no. 7 consists only of five converging lines, but these lines are more swastika-like, with minute circles dividing them. Furthermore, there is another line surrounding the *âyah*-marker. One common feature that is present in these three examples is the set of outer small circles attached to the petals.

In Fig. 6b(ii), nos. 8, 9 and 10 the outer small circles at the edge of the petals are now drawn within a larger circle. No. 8 consists of seven lines converging towards the small circle at the centre of the *âyah*-marker. In no. 9 and no. 10, these converging lines are given some volume, which indirectly enhances the flower motif in the *âyah*-marker. It can be said that it forms a kind of petal within a petal. Or perhaps, from another angle, it is like an overlapping petal - four or six smaller petals on top of the same amount of larger petals. No. 8 consists of four overlapping petals whereas no. 10 consists of six overlapping petals.

In Fig. 6b(iii), nos. 11, 12; 13; 14 and 15 too comprise swastika-like lines within the circle. There is no circle outside the petals but they are now drawn within the five or six petals. No. 11 and no. 12 can be considered as part of the same group with their clear and simple design. On the other hand nos. 13, 14 and 15 are in the group which have extra details within the petals. Except for no. 13, the rest are without an outline surrounding the petals.



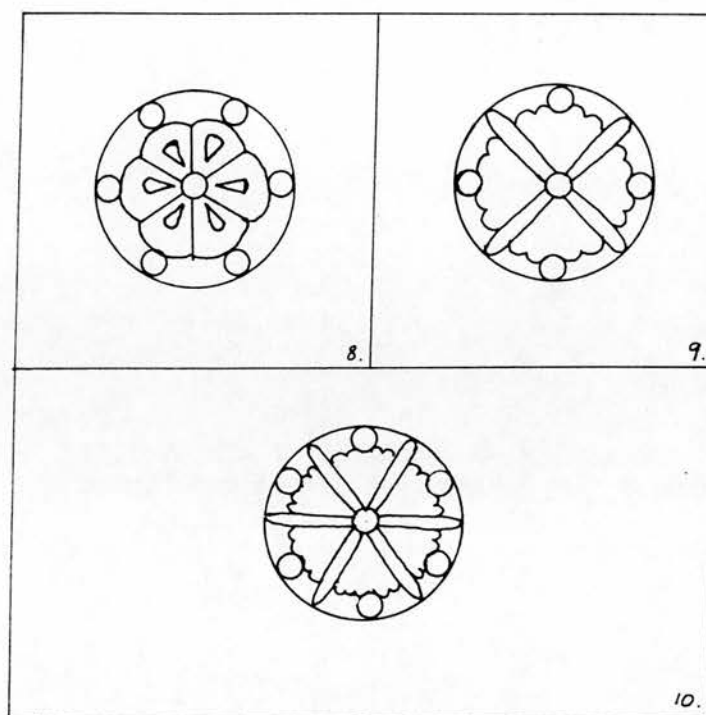


Fig. 6b(ii).

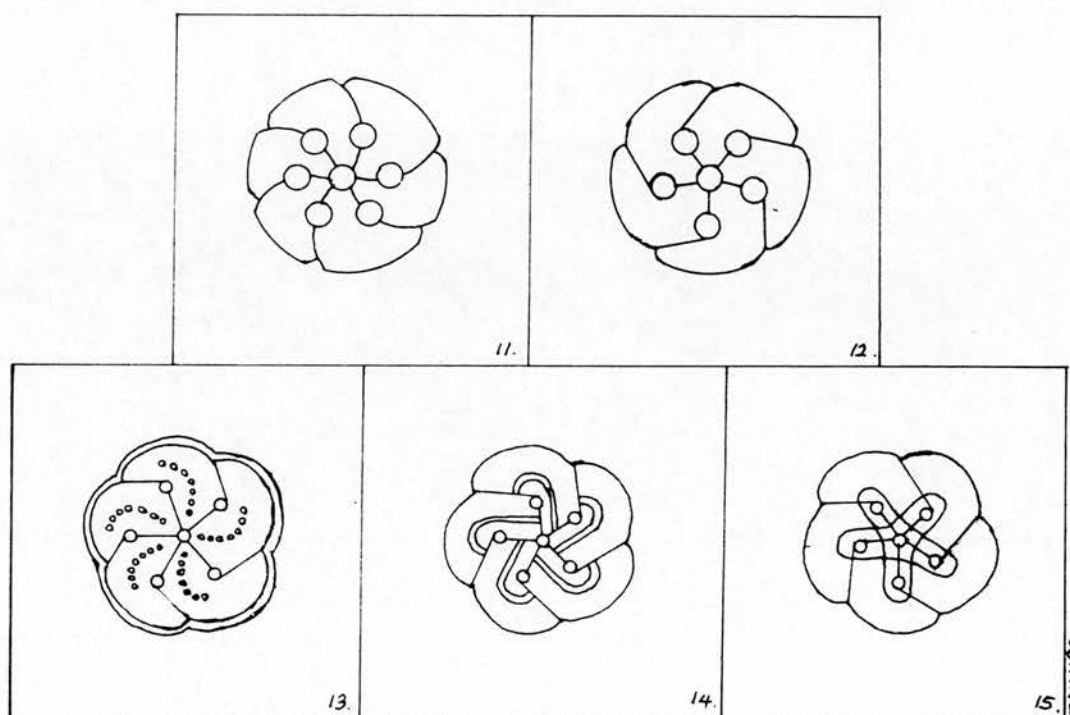


Fig. 6b(iii).

Figs. 6b(ii) and 6b(iii). The Safavid *ayah*-markers.

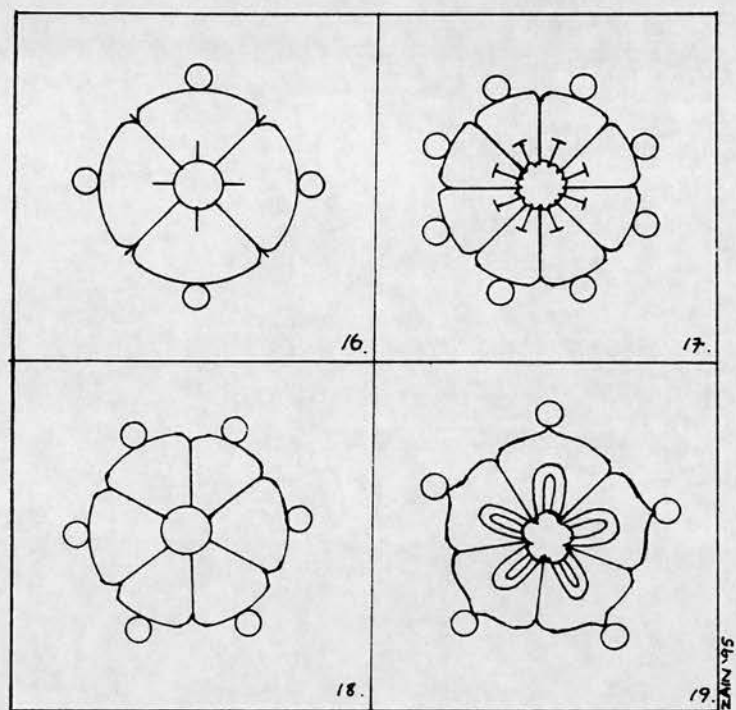


Fig. 6c.

Fig.6c. The Safavid *ayah*-markers.

### 3.1.3. Type C

In Type C design (see Fig. 6c, nos. 16, 17; 18 and 19) the converging lines method is still maintained. There are four, five, six or eight lines to a single *ayah*-marker. Also, the outer small circles drawn by the edges of the petals are still maintained. There are at least four different variants in this design as shown in nos. 16, 17, 18 and 19. The circles at the centre of no. 17 and no. 19 are different from those of no. 16 and no. 18. To a certain extent the inner circle corresponds with the outer and bigger petal-like circle of the *ayah*-marker. No. 19 consists of shorter overlapping petals as compared to no. 9 or no. 10 in Type B (see Fig. 6b(ii)).

## 3.2 The geometric design

Similarly, in the case of geometric design (see Fig. 7a, Fig. 7b and Fig. 7c.), at least three different types of design can be recognised. The identifying factor is still at the centre of the *ayah*-marker; to this may be added the geometric variants within. As is the case with the organic design above, the geometric type can also be divided into three main types. They are:

- a). Type D : Without the small circle at the centre of the *ayah*-markers.
- b). Type E : With the small circle at the centre of the *ayah*-markers.
- c). Type F : With a slightly bigger circle than Type E at the centre of the *ayah*-markers.

### 3.2.1 Type D

Type D can be seen in Fig. 7a — nos. 1, 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7 and 8. The *âyah*-marker in no. 1 is just a plain round design.<sup>43</sup> No. 2 and no. 3 consist of six lines converging towards the centre of the *âyah*-markers. The only difference between them is in the number of small circles at the edges of the bigger circle. The former consists of three small circles, whereas the latter consists of six. The internal design for no. 4, is the six swastika lines with minute circles in the middle of these lines. There is also another type of internal design as shown in no. 5 and no. 6. The internal lines in these *âyah*-markers are semi-circular<sup>44</sup> in shape. Perhaps an extension of this is the hook-line design in no. 7. All these three examples (no. 5, no. 6 and no. 7) have small circles at the edges of the *âyah*-markers. Last but not least, no. 8 presents us with an internal star-shaped motif with four minute circle in between, but without small circles at the edge. Therefore, there are at least six different designs under Type D.

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<sup>43</sup> This design is quite commonly found prior to the Safavid period.

<sup>44</sup> According to Muhammad Haydar Dughlat, Ustaz Bâbâ Haji (a painter) was able to draw fifty identical semi-circles without the aid of a compass. See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, 169.

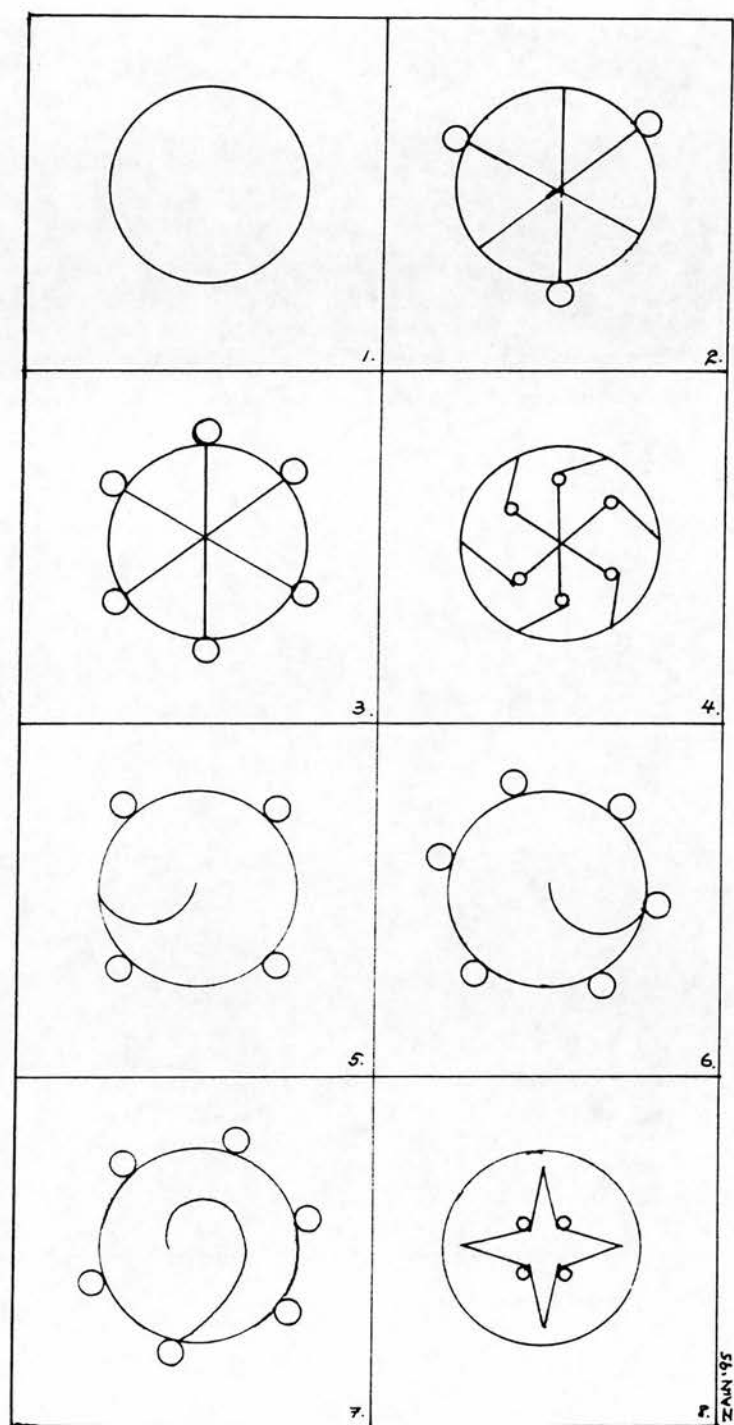


Fig. 7a. The Safavid *ayah*-markers.



### 3.2.2 Type E

Type E can further be sub-divided into four different internal designs [see Figs. 7b(i), 7b(ii), 7b(iii) and 7b(iv)]. First, in Fig. 7b(i), at least eight designs or variants can be identified. In these eight variants, nos. 9, 10 and 11 are in the same group with internal semi-circular lines that are linked to the small circle at the centre. There are also different number of small circles attached to the *âyah*-markers. On the other hand, nos. 12, 13; 14; 15 and 16, have a hooked-line that is linked to the small circle at the centre. Other things remain the same, except for no. 16, where the hooked line is now in a spiral pattern<sup>45</sup> and the external small circles are now within the *âyah*-marker and not outside it.

The next group of *âyah*-markers [Fig. 7b(ii)], consists, as nos. 17, 18; 19 and 20 show, of four and six converging lines linked to the small circle at the centre. Except for no. 19, all have small circles at the beginning of these converging lines. No. 20 has an extra internal design at the centre of the *âyah*-marker, but the main structure is still the same. Another group of designs [nos. 21, 22 and 23 see Fig.(iii)] predominantly have swastika lines within the *âyah*-marker. A similar concept in the arrangement of small circles at the edge of the *âyah*-marker and at the centre of the swastika lines can be found here. An exception is no. 23 which was given twelve small circles at the outer edge of the *âyah*-marker. This type of design has not occurred before. The last type is as shown in Fig. 7b(iv) — no. 24. An internal six-pointed star-shaped design is set within the *âyah*-marker, whose outer circumference is decorated with six circles.

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<sup>45</sup> The spiral pattern (*islîmî*) is one of the seven manners of painting popular during the Safavid period. See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 178.

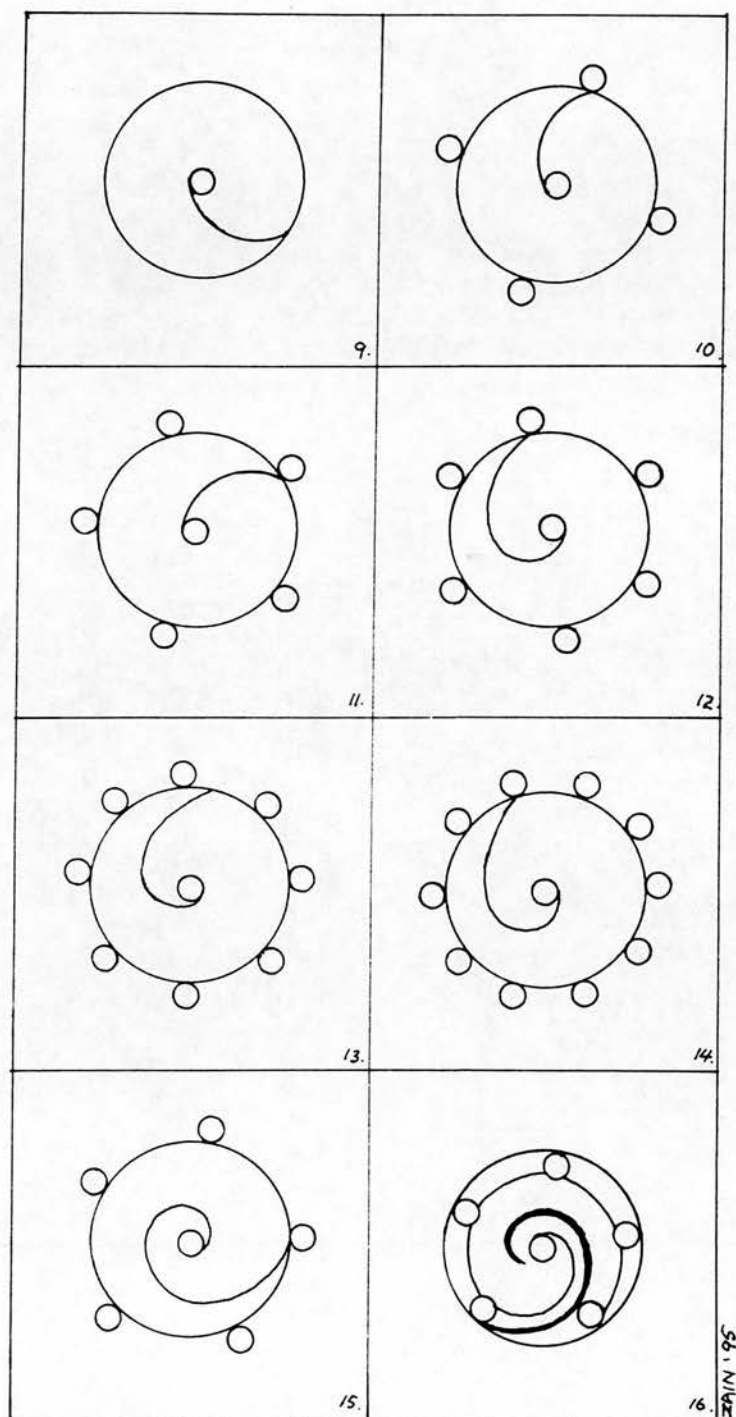


Fig. 7b(i). The Safavid *ayah*-markers.

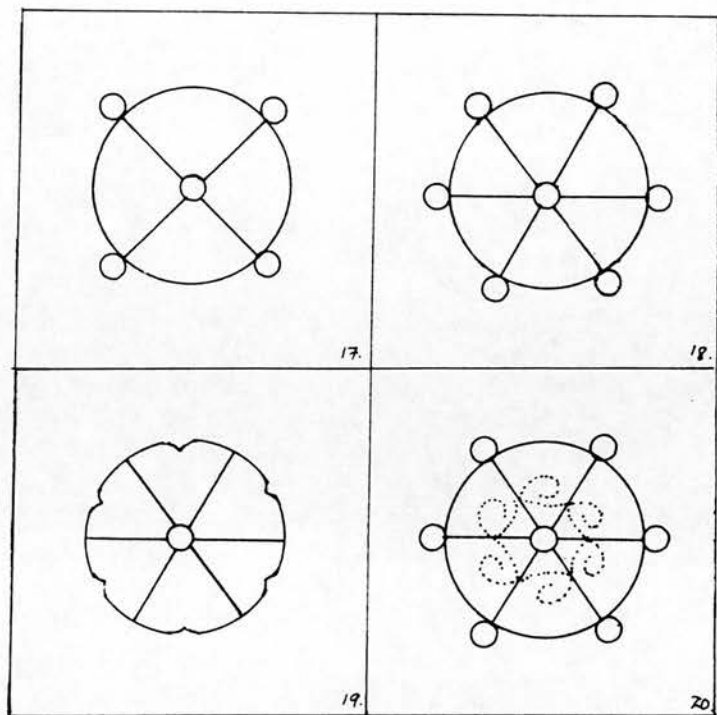


Fig. 7b(ii).

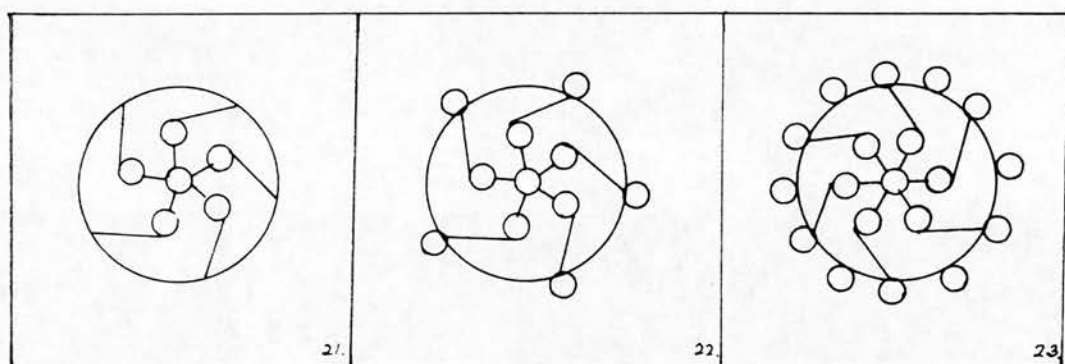


Fig. 7b(iii).

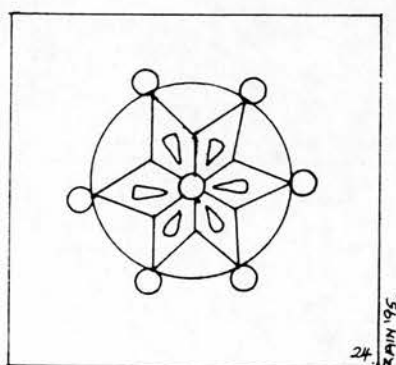


Fig. 7b(iv).

Fig. 7b(ii), (iii) and (iv). The Safavid *âyah*-markers.

### 3.2.3 Type F

The Type F design is one where the centre circle is slightly bigger than those of the previous designs. This can be seen in Fig. 7c(i) nos. 25; 26; 27; 28 and 29, and in Fig. 7c(ii) nos. 30, 31 and 32. Basically similar formulae were used for these groups of designs. The internal star-shaped design is slightly broader and this is due to the big circle at the centre of the *âyah*-marker. In the case of the group of designs in Fig. 7c(ii), all three seems to have been using the same working formula in their internal design. The small circles at the edges of the *âyah*-markers were still maintained.

### 3.3 The plant design

Plant designs in *âyah*-markers are rather rare in Safavid Qur'âns. Abstracted plant motifs were painted at the centre of the *âyah*-markers (see Fig. 8: nos. 33, 34 and 35). This style had already existed in the 15th-century Qur'ân<sup>46</sup> and surfaced again in the late 17th century Qur'ân from Isfâhân.<sup>47</sup> The plant motifs are not as finely drawn as that of the 15th-century Qur'ân (see Fig. 5c no. 34). The leaves and flowers seem to branch out from a single point and not from separate individual branches, like those in the Fig. 5c no. 34. The number of leaves drawn are in even numbers and are drawn symmetrically with the flower at the centre. These flower designs, especially those in no. 33 and no. 35, remind us of some grass tufts or flower plants commonly found in secular manuscripts. An example of this can be seen in a manuscript painting entitled "Camp Scene" from a Layla and Majnun. This manuscript was written by Amîr ʿAlî Shir Navâʾî from Herât datable ca. 1485.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Mashhad Shrine Library No. 414, and Fig. 5c No. 34. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.81.

<sup>47</sup> CBL Ms. 1554 (Arberry No. 172).

<sup>48</sup> John Rylands Library, Manchester (Turk. ms. 3, fol. 16b). See Soudavar, *Art*, fig.10.

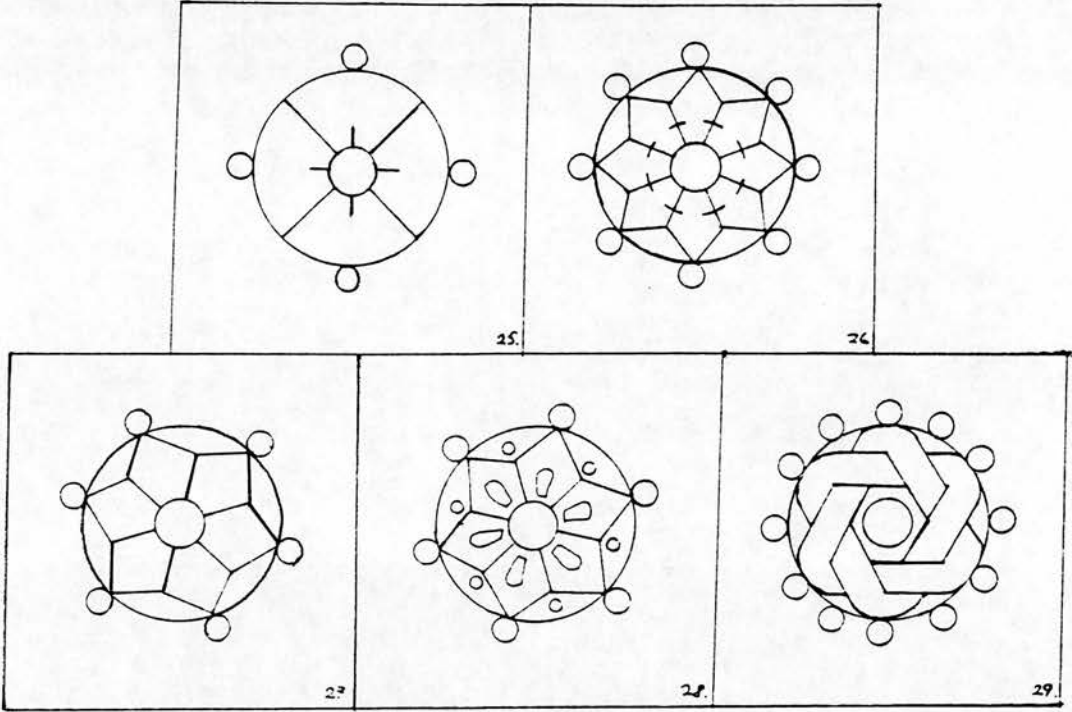


Fig. 7c(i).

Fig. 7c(i). The Safavid *âyah*-markers.



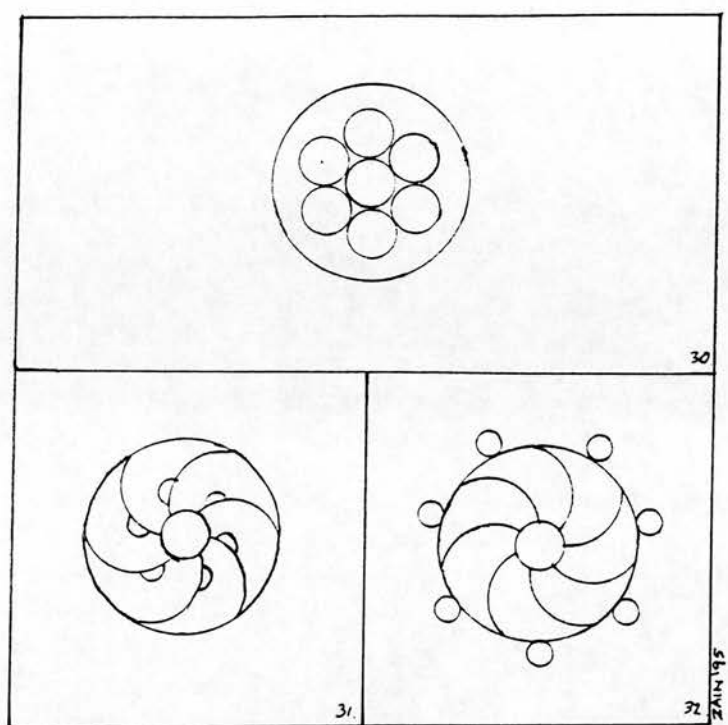


Fig. 7c(ii).

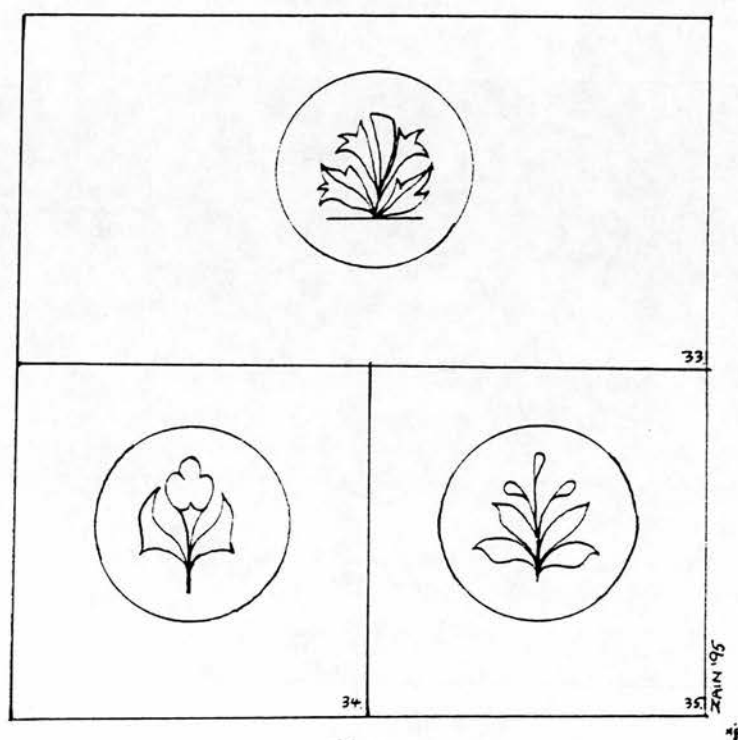


Fig. 8.

Fig. 7c (ii) and Fig. 8. The Safavid *āyah*-markers.

#### 4. Preliminary conclusion

There are many predetermined areas that were illuminated in the Qur'ân. The *âyah*-marker is one of them and was frequently illuminated by the artist. This symbol for 'stop', a way of proclaiming the end of a single *âyah*, had provided opportunities for artistic experimentation to take place. Obviously, a simple black or gold dot is not enough to indicate the end of an *âyah*. The artist saw this as an excuse for further artistic involvement in the decoration of the Qur'ân. It also suggests generous support from patron, merchant or individual, who normally stipulates the amount of decoration or illumination in the Qur'ân. Obviously, richly illuminated Qur'âns are those commissioned by wealthy patrons.

The line drawings of the *âyah*-markers given above clearly demonstrate some identifiable differences in design and style in the course of the Safavid period. There was of course already a tradition of *âyah*-markers which existed prior to the Safavid period. Four principal designs dominated:- the letter type, the organic type, the geometric type and the plant type. These designs can be said to have covered almost all possibilities in the decoration of an *âyah*-marker. These four principal designs can also be found in the Safavid period. Safavid artists understood these formulae and strove to produce their own unique style. Yet there are also many overlapping designs for *âyah*-markers in Safavid Qur'âns. What distinguishes them from those of other periods is the overall illuminated decoration of these Qur'âns. The Safavid Qur'âns have a certain classic maturity, with not too many details; they are relatively simple, non-exotic and yet not too simplified. They reflect a well-controlled design, injecting the right amount of decoration within the restricted space between the *âyât*. This placing creates a counter-balance to the grand design surrounding the space allocated for the text block of the Qur'ân. Thus one way of detecting Safavid Qur'âns is by means of its *âyah*-markers.

## **Chapter 5**

### **1. The decorative marginal design**

#### **2. The *manzil* design**

#### **3. The *juz'* design**

#### **4. The *ḥizb* design**

##### **4.1 The *rub*<sup>C</sup> design**

##### **4.2 The *nisf* design**

##### **4.3 The *thulth* design**

#### **5. The *rukū*<sup>C</sup> design**

### **6. The *khamsah* and *asharah* design**

#### **6.1. The pre-Safavid designs**

#### **6.2. The Safavid designs**

#### **7. The *sajdah* design**

### **8. Preliminary conclusion**

## 1. The decorative marginal design<sup>1</sup>

"Korans [*sic*] of breathtaking beauty are created by superb artists working for the glory of God and the satisfaction of wealthy and pious patrons; the binders vie in skill with the penmen and the illuminators."<sup>2</sup>

According to Iskandar Munshi, there was an enormous amount of manuscripts gilded and illuminated by eminent artists and illuminators at the time of Shâh Abbâs.<sup>3</sup> To Ettinghausen, the illuminated pages in the Qur'ân are a legitimate expression of the artists.<sup>4</sup> It is not only accepted "by ostentatious princes, but by the pious mullas as well".<sup>5</sup> According to Déroche, "illumination was always used to mark the various divisions of the Qur'ânic text".<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the division of the *âyah* mark was one of the earliest ornaments or designs inserted in the text.<sup>7</sup> These divisions were marked with coloured letters, with decorated letters or words, or with devices within the text block itself or in the margin.<sup>8</sup> These divisions are the *manzil* (stage), *juz'* (parts), *hizb* (a

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter was inspired by Arberry's suggestion of a possible research area in Qur'ân illumination. See A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Illuminated: A Handlist of the Korans in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran: An Introduction with Selections by A. J. Arberry* (London, 1953), 33.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold, *Painting*, 141. See also Ettinghausen, 'Manuscript Illuminated' in A. U. P., *Survey*, 1937.

<sup>4</sup> See Ettinghausen, in his chapter on 'A Signed and Dated Seljuq Qur'ân', in *Islamic*, 510.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 510. See also Arnold, *Painting*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> D. S. Rice, *The Unique Ibn al-Bawwâb Manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library* (Dublin, 1955), 29.

<sup>8</sup> See S. Khemir in his chapter on 'The Arts of the Book', in *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, ed. J. D. Dodds (New York, 1992), 116.

smaller division of *juz*'), *rukūʿ* (section) and *sajdah* (prostration). The *ḥizb* mark can be further sub-divided into quarters and these are called *rubʿ* (one-fourth), *niṣf* (one-half) and *thulth* (three-fourths). On the other hand, in a *rukūʿ*, after every five *āyāt* the word *khamsah* (five) is placed within the roundel; similarly, the word *ʿasharah* (ten) for every ten *āyāt*.<sup>9</sup> Most of these symbols were written in coloured ink within the text or is used in the margin of the text block. They were added to facilitate reading without, however, interrupting the flow of the text.<sup>10</sup> These separate divisions are consistently marked within a given Qurʾān by a particular type of design, so that the reader is alerted to the often meaning of the division by the design alone. But these designs may vary from one Qurʾān to the other.

For example, one finds the letter *ʿayn* in red as a symbol for *rukūʿ*, the word *juz* ' to mark the beginning of a new *juz* ' ; or *khamsah* and *ʿasharah* in blue or in gold, to mark every 5 or 10 verses. All these additions are to be found in the margin. All these margin symbols of coloured letters, which are common in the Qurʾāns of the 8th-10th-century A.D., and continue thereafter, gradually started to change from the 14th-century onwards.<sup>11</sup> By the Safavid period, these margin symbols had evolved and developed into a more elaborate designs than were to be found in earlier periods.<sup>12</sup> But the post-Safavid period seems less innovative and many clichés in its design to be found.

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<sup>9</sup> James, *QB*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, "Qurʾānic Orthography: The Written Representation of the Recited Text of The Qurʾān," *Islamic Quarterly* 38/3 (1994), 180.

<sup>11</sup> James, *MS*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ersoy, *Türk*, 94.



## 2 The *manzil* design

The 114 *sûrahs* in the Qur'ân can be divided into several *manâzil* (plural of *manzil*).<sup>13</sup> The purpose of this division is to facilitate the reading of the entire Qur'ân within a week.<sup>14</sup> Hence, there are seven *manâzil* in the Qur'an.<sup>15</sup> The *manzil* marks were very rarely found in an illuminated Qur'ân. The reason for this is not known. Perhaps this symbol was intrinsically less popular or was less demanded by patrons. Furthermore, it could be considered as an extra design as compared to the standard illuminated margin marks or symbols that are normally found. This extra degree of elaboration meant that such Qur'âns probably fetched an extra price commensurate with the extra designs. The present study includes at least one Qur'ân with a *manzil* design. This Qur'ân, dated to the early 17th-century, was copied by Shagird, with a Persian commentary by Ḥusain Va'iz Kâshif.<sup>16</sup> It is a beautiful Qur'ân with many designs in it. Its provenance is not known but, according to Arberry, this Qur'ân is from Persia.<sup>17</sup>

An example of this *manzil* design can be seen in Fig. 1.<sup>18</sup> The words *waqf manzil*<sup>19</sup> were written in a vermilion *naskh* script at the centre of an eight-pointed

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<sup>13</sup> R. Bell, *Introduction to The Qur'ân* (Edinburgh, 1953), 51.

<sup>14</sup> Watt & Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Please refer to Chapter 1 page 8.

<sup>16</sup> CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

<sup>19</sup> This words *waqf manzil*, is an indication to the reader that he has arrived at one of the 7 divisions (*manâzil*) of the Qur'ân. If he choose to read the Qur'ân according to

medallion. Within this gold-based medallion are some floral designs which unfold from the centre, with eight lotus flowers<sup>20</sup> enclosed in an eight-lobed medallion. A thick black and white outline frame was given to this medallion. In terms of its frame design, this eight-lobed frame design is an abstract lotus design of a type commonly found in China during the T'ang Dynasty. "It was on mirrors that the shape was most widely employed".<sup>21</sup> Mirrors have always been regarded as precious and have traditionally been one of the export items brought from China to Persia along with other things such as paper, ceramics, silverware and textile goods. Perhaps this abstract lotus frame design, then, was influenced by items (such as mirrors) imported from China.

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this division, then he may stop at this point or, continue reading in the next *manzil*.

<sup>20</sup> Lotus flowers can be found in the Qur'ân as early as 1000-1 A.D. See Rice, "*Ibn al-Bawwâb Manuscript*", 29.

<sup>21</sup> J. Rawson, *Chinese Ornament: The Lotus and the Dragon* (London, 1984), 125.

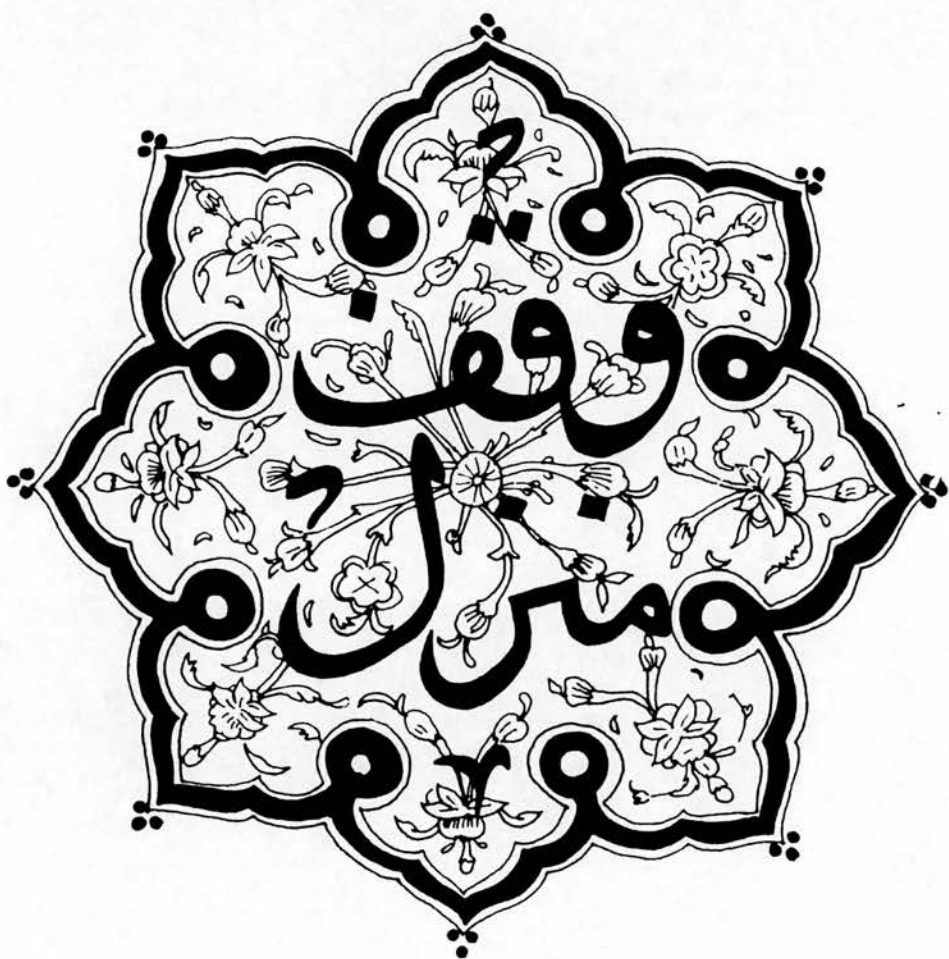


Fig. 1. The *manzil* design (Safavid period).

### 3 The *juz'* design

There are 30 *ajzâ'* (plural of *juz'*) in a complete Qur'ân and they are always marked. The marking is either in word form - that is by writing the word *juz'* itself — or by means of a medallion with the word *juz'* written at the centre. In both cases they are placed in the margin next to the beginning of a new *juz'*. When the new *juz'* is announced simply by the word *juz'*, the script is quite simple and straight-forward. But the decorated medallion is more elaborate and rather interesting in the stylistic development of marginal design.

Some examples of these pre-Safavid *juz'* marks or symbols can be seen in Fig. 2a and 2b. Basically, the frame or the hidden structure for *juz'* marker comprises variants of the tear-drop frame structure. The word itself can be in a circular frame, a lotus frame or an escutcheon frame. These frames housed two important elements that is, the word *juz'* and the scrollwork design. The scrollwork designs were presented in repeat form in alternation (Fig. 2a, nos. 1<sup>22</sup>, 2<sup>23</sup> and Fig. 2b, no. 5<sup>24</sup>), in mirror image form (Fig. 2a, no. 3<sup>25</sup> and 4<sup>26</sup>), or in spiral form (Fig. 2b, no. 6<sup>27</sup>). Other than the scrollwork design, the cloud scroll motif is also important in the *juz'* marker (Fig. 2b, no. 6). Perhaps it can be said that the use of this cloud scroll or cloud band motif is

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<sup>22</sup> CBL Ms. 1475 (Arberry no.184).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no.141).

<sup>25</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>26</sup> *Op cit.*

<sup>27</sup> CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no.145).

actually an extension of the *abrî* concept mentioned in Qâdî Ahmad's treatise in the 16th-century.<sup>28</sup> According to Bayani, Minorsky and Ettinghausen, *abrî* refers to "the image of clouds".<sup>29</sup> The cloud scroll motif not only enclosed the text, but also extended into the marginal medallion design. Thus the *abrî* concept is widely employed in Qur'anic manuscripts.

Furthermore, there are also three types of extended plant motifs or lotus-bud motifs<sup>30</sup> drawn outside all the frames described above. First, the vertical plant motifs which recall of creepers. They are abstracted plant motifs (Fig. 2a, no. 1 to 4). These types of design were common in 14th-century Qur'âns. Second, the ray-like plant<sup>31</sup> motif extended from a circular frame (Fig. 2b, no. 5) and third, an abstract vertical plant motif (Fig. 2b, no. 6). The 15th-century design tends to be more simplified, especially in the decoration outside the frame containing the word *juz'*, as compared to the 14th-century design.

In comparison with the Safavid Qur'âns (see Fig. 2c and 2d), the basic frame structure for the *juz'* marks in pre-Safavid Qur'âns is quite similar. Perhaps the tear-drop frame is less popular. In the Safavid period, the most commonly used frames for the word *juz'* are the rhombus, the circle and the escutcheon. Of these, the circle

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<sup>28</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 178.

<sup>29</sup> See Ettinghausen, 'Abrî Painting' in *"Islamic Art and Archaeology"*, pp.346-7. See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 178. See also Hillenbrand, *"The Qur'ân Illuminated"*, 124.

<sup>30</sup> Melikian-Chirvani describes such design as "lotus-bud shaped" in *Islamic Metalwork*, 159.

<sup>31</sup> Lings relates this type of design to the concept of "*shamsah*" and the "tree" which has symbolic meaning in the Qur'anic art, in his chapter on 'The Principle of Qur'ân Illumination', in *QACI*, 74.



seems to be the most popular in the 16th and 17th-century. Furthermore, the style of the design in Fig. 2d, no. 9<sup>32</sup> or no. 10<sup>33</sup> resembles quite closely the style of the late 15th-century *shamsah* design found in a double-page frontispiece of a manuscript of Sa<sup>c</sup>dî's *Bûstân* from Tabrîz (see Pl. 2)<sup>34</sup>. According to Abolala Soudavar, the double-page frontispiece was added later during the Safavid period.<sup>35</sup> A rather similar type of design can also be found in the famous carpet from the Ardabil Shrine (Tabrîz?) which is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>36</sup> The centre medallion of this particular carpet seems to come from the same school of design. Perhaps another parallel in terms of style can be seen between Fig. 2c, no. 8<sup>37</sup> and f.1v of Shâh Tahmâsp's *Khamsah* of Nizâmî, ca. 1540 A.D. (see Pl. 1).<sup>38</sup> Since the latter is from Tabrîz, perhaps the example in Fig. 2c, no. 8 can also be attributed to the same place.

As in the case of the internal scrollwork design, the flower and leaf motifs were elegantly drawn. The plant motifs are so overpowering that they even replace the geometrical frames enclosing the word *juz'* (Fig. 2d, nos. 9, 10, 11<sup>39</sup> and 12<sup>40</sup>).

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<sup>32</sup> CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no.161).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Sotheby's, 15 December 1978, lot 217.

<sup>35</sup> Soudavar, *Art*, 136.

<sup>36</sup> This Ardabil Shrine carpet was signed by Maksud of Kashan and dated 946 (1539-40 A.D.). See I. Bennett (ed.), *Rugs & Carpets of the World* (London,1977), 46. See also Blair and Bloom, *Art and Architecture*, 172.

<sup>37</sup> CBL Ms. 1524 (Arberry no. 169).

<sup>38</sup> Welch, *Wonders*, 134.

<sup>39</sup> CBL Ms. 1579 (Arberry no.181).

<sup>40</sup> CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no.180).

Thus the plant motifs themselves become a frame for the word *juz'*. The external vertical lines extended from the frames are much less elaborately decorated than those in Fig. 2a, nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4. The rather big plant motifs above and below the central lobed oval in Fig. 2d, no. 12, is still in the style of the 13th and 14th-century (see Pl. 3 and 4). Relevant comparators are an Ayyubid Qur'ân in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul, which is apparently of 13th-century date and from Syria,<sup>41</sup> and a 14th-century Qur'ân, from Iraq, probably Baghdad (ca. 1313-1325 A.D.), in the Khalili collection.<sup>42</sup> According to James, this Qur'ân is the work of Arghun al-Kâmilî, a pupil of Yâqût. Fig. 2d, no. 11 and 12 are examples taken from 18th-century Qur'âns. At this period there seems to be a come-back in the style of the *juz'* markers. This suggests an eclectic style the later period of Qur'ânic art.

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<sup>41</sup> No. 439. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.33.

<sup>42</sup> Khalili, QUR162. See James, *MS*, p.110, pl. 24. Published Geneva 1988, cat. no.9.

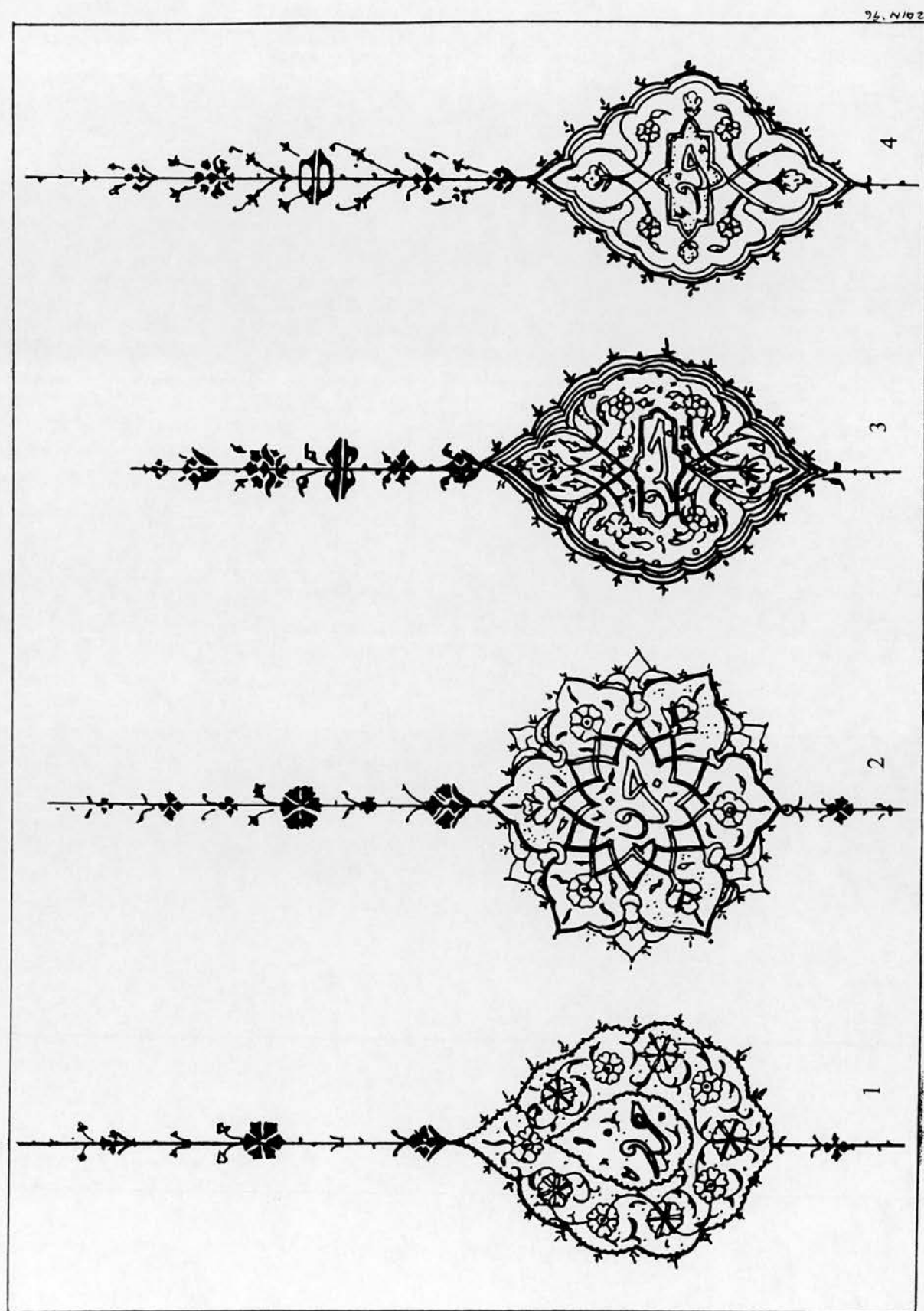
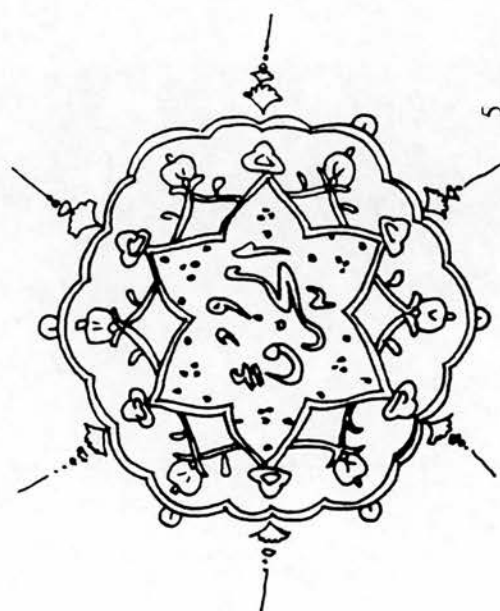
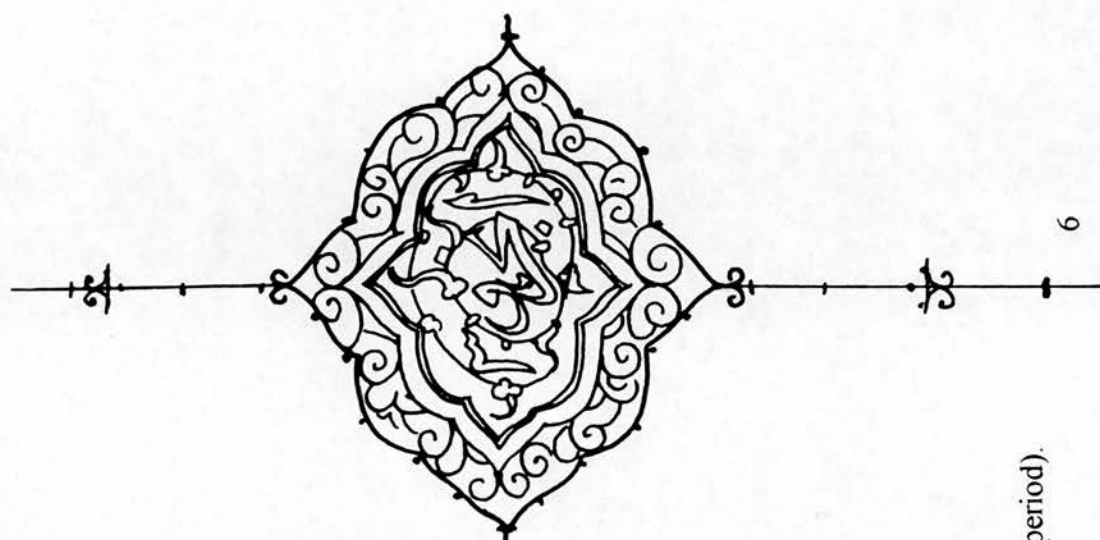


Fig. 2a. The *juz* ' design (Pre-Safavid period).

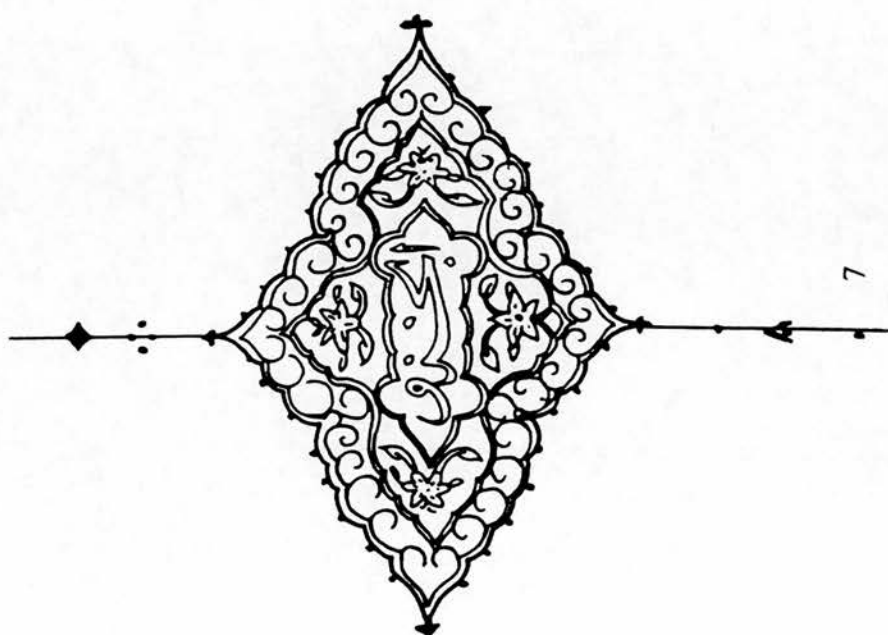


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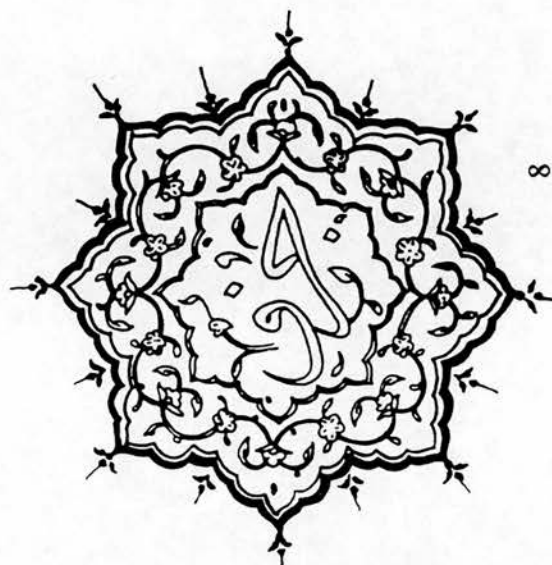


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Fig. 2b. The *juz* ' design (Pre-Safavid period).



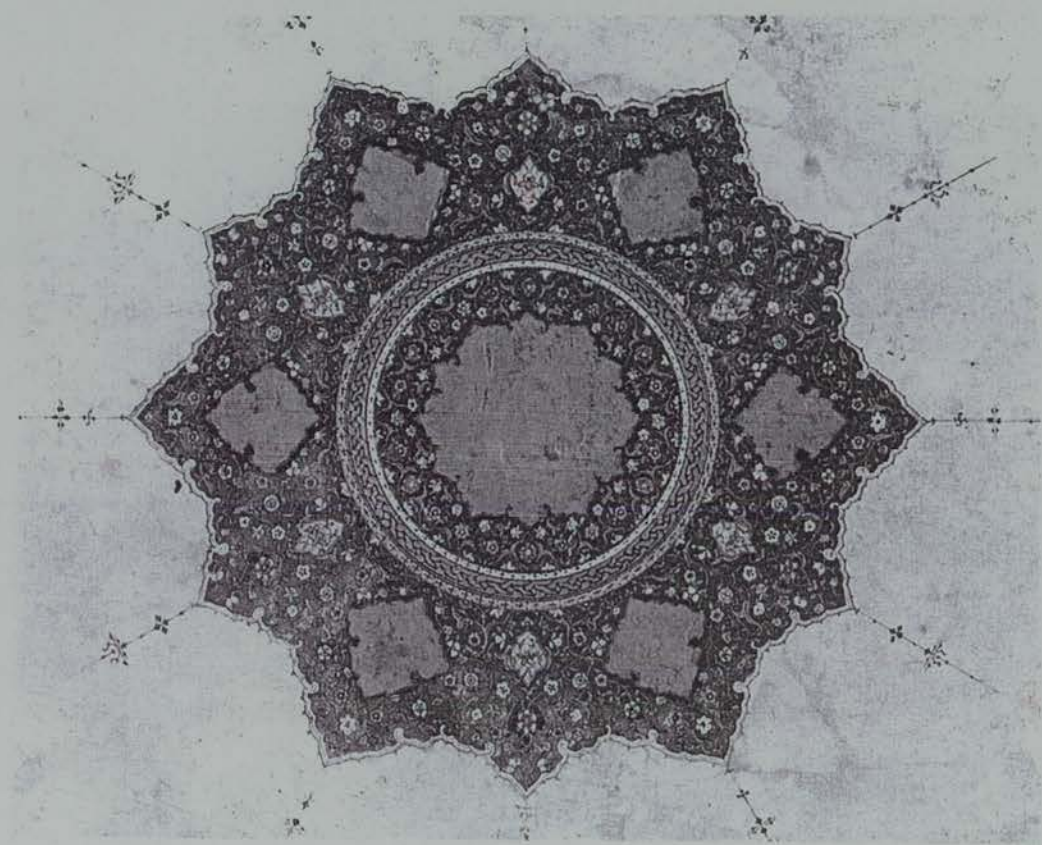
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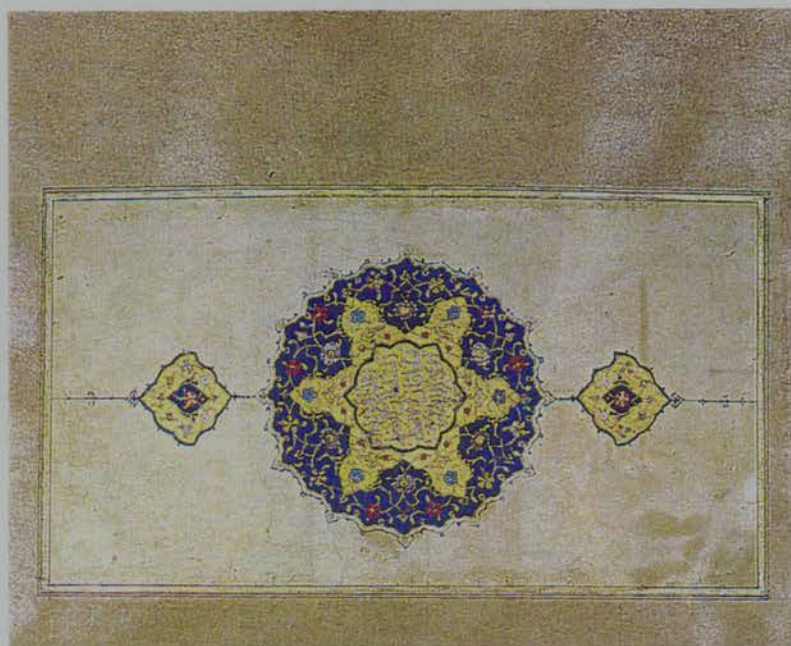
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Fig. 2c. The *juz* ' design (Safavid period).





Pl. 1. Shāh Tahmāsp's (Quintet) *Khamsah* of Nizāmī f. 1v. Datable: 1540 A.D.



Pl. 2. *Saʿdī Būstān* from Tabrīz. 15th century A.D.

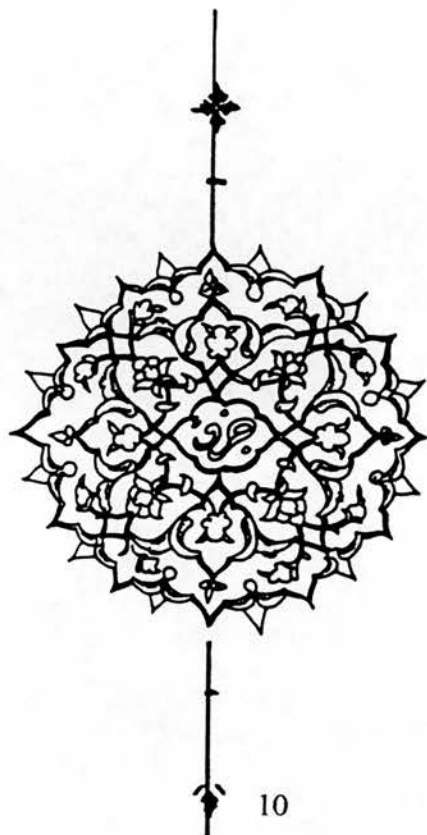
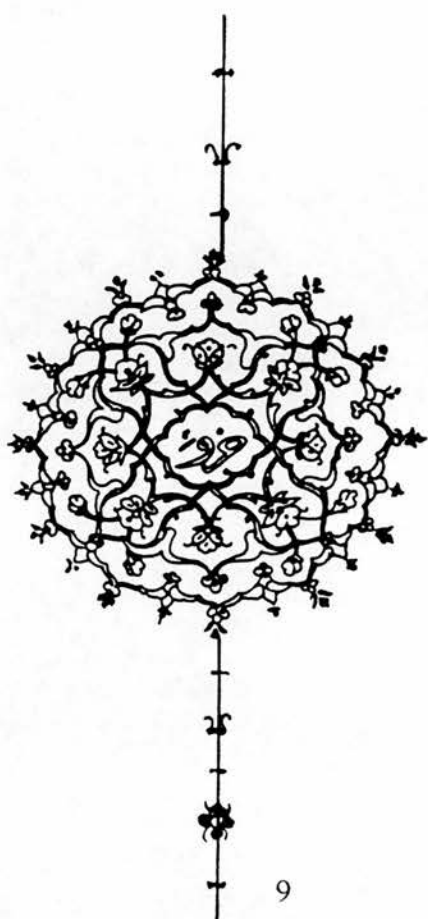
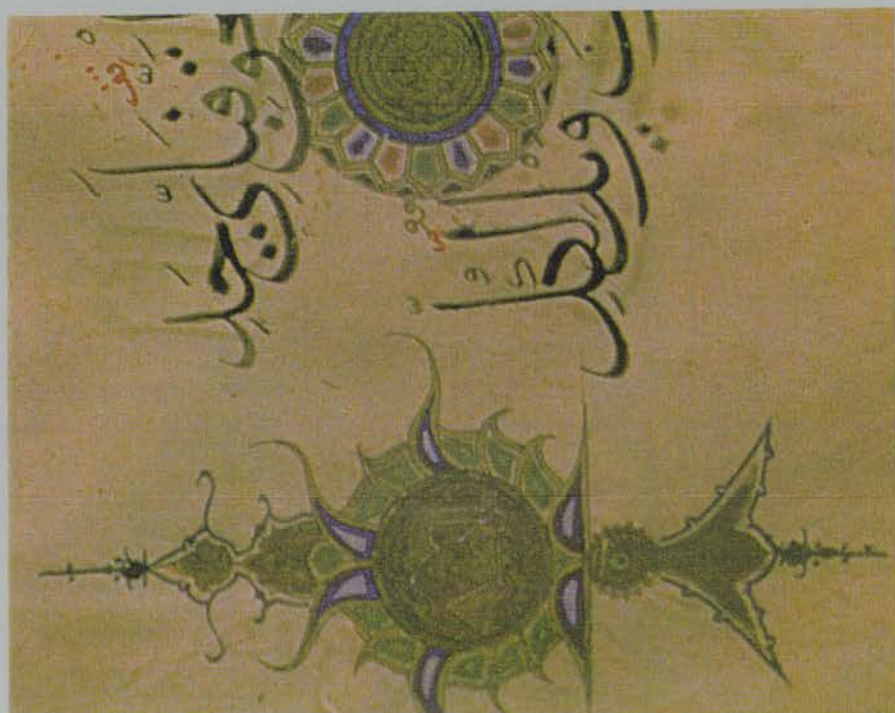
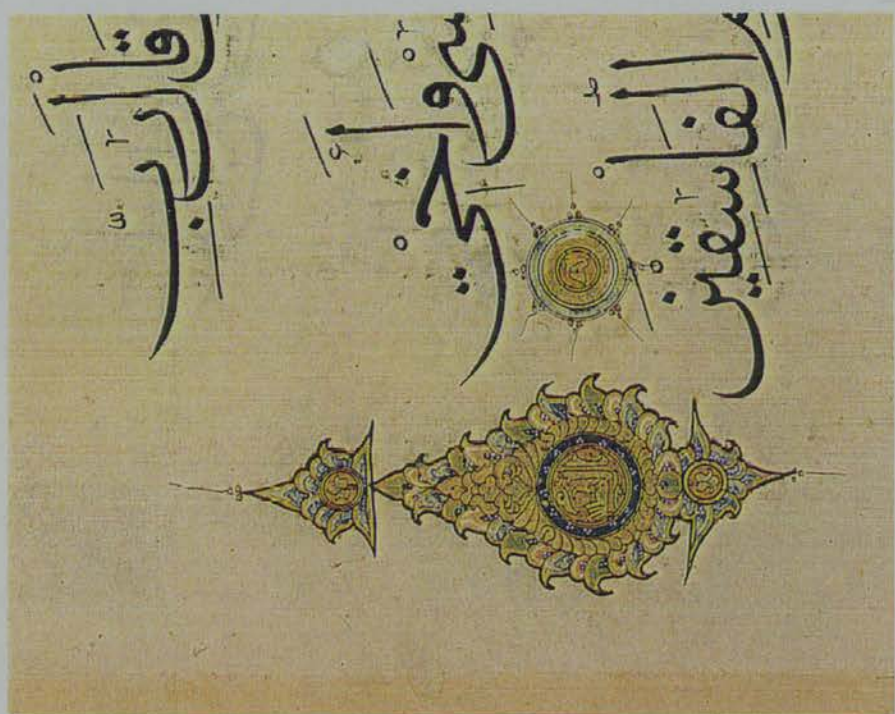


Fig. 2d. The *juz'* design (Safavid period).





Pl. 3 . Istanbul, Turkish and Islamic Museum, 439. Lings, *Q4IC*, pl.33.



Pl. 4. Khalili, *QUR162*. James, *MS*, pl.24.

#### 4 The *hizb* design

In the division of the text, *hizb* is a smaller division of a *juz'*.<sup>43</sup> Two *aḥzâb* (plural of *hizb*) constitute a *juz'*.<sup>44</sup> According to Denffer,<sup>45</sup> each *hizb* is then further subdivided into quarters: *rub<sup>c</sup>* (one-fourth), *niṣf* (one-half) and *thulth* (three-quarters). They were normally written or indicated in the margin with or without decoration surrounding the relevant word.

The *hizb* designs in the Safavid period are much more interesting than what is found in the earlier period (as shown in Figs. 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d). The typical design prior to the Safavids seems less laborious, more simple and more clear, than 16th-century work. The word *hizb* is stronger than the surrounding design (Fig. 3a, no. 1<sup>46</sup> and 2<sup>47</sup>) and was written at the centre of the framing escutcheon (Fig. 3a, no. 1). Perhaps this reflects a straight forward emphasis on the accuracy of the text copied. This is not to say that in the Safavid period there was more concern for the design and less concern for the text. Perhaps one could say that in the Safavid period scribes and illuminators strove to balance their artistic skills both in the copying of the text and in its incorporation of designs. In other words, the scribe and the illuminator were both highly skilled persons; sometimes they were one and the same, as in the case of Ruzbihan.

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<sup>43</sup> Watt & Bell, *Qur'ân*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Abdul-Fattah, Hassanin & Saleh, *Tajwîd*, 8; and al-Fârûqî & al-Fârûqî, *Cultural*, 171.

<sup>45</sup> Denffer, *Uḥûm*, 69.

<sup>46</sup> CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no.145).

<sup>47</sup> CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no.141).

On the other hand, in the case of *hizb* markers Safavid design seems more balanced than its predecessors in terms of the weight between the word and the design, even though, at first glance, there is a tendency for the decorative elements to seem stronger than the word itself. However, from another point of view, the word also seems to function as part of the design. The calligraphic letters harmonise with the calligraphic strokes of the scrollwork within the *hizb* frame (see Fig. 3b, no. 3<sup>48</sup> and 4<sup>49</sup>). Even when, as in the case of Fig. 3c, no. 5<sup>50</sup>, the word *hizb* was written outside the main design, it seems graphically correct. Or, to put it another way, the word can be said to be part of the design. Both the designs in Fig. 3c emphasise whether by a roundel or a lotus frame, the decoration even more than the word *hizb* itself, which is physically removed from the main body of ornament. And yet, thanks to the strong graphic presence of the word *hizb*, the composition is balanced. This type of design formula lasted for at least two centuries. But, by the beginning of the 18th-century (Fig. 3d, no. 7<sup>51</sup> and 8<sup>52</sup>), the *hizb* design seems rather to reflect ideas already established prior to the Safavid period.

It is interesting to note some parallels in other media. Visually Fig. 3c, no. 5 seems to echo at least two designs in other media (see Pl. 5<sup>53</sup> and 6<sup>54</sup>). The design in

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<sup>48</sup> CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no.162).

<sup>49</sup> CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry no.161).

<sup>50</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no.156).

<sup>51</sup> CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no.177).

<sup>52</sup> CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no.180).

<sup>53</sup> A. Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery Persia, Syria, Egypt, Turkey* (London, 1957), pl.93a.

<sup>54</sup> A. Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World* (New York, 1979),



the ceramic piece and the steel standards clearly illustrate the conventions of the period. Both these examples are from 17th-century Safavid work. Both examples have a lotus-bud shape at the top and plant scrollwork within the frame. The origin of this design is not known. But perhaps this design can be traced as far back as metalwork of ca. 1200, for example mortar published by Melikian-Chirvani in 1982 (see Pl. 7).<sup>55</sup> There may have been a master design already formulated by this time, which was later distributed amongst craftsmen in workshops or ateliers across the country.

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pp.148-149. See also in *Arts of Islam*, Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, No.236.

<sup>55</sup> Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork*, 159.

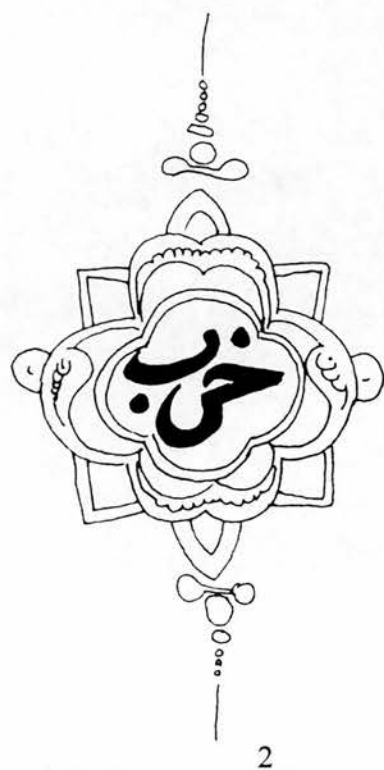
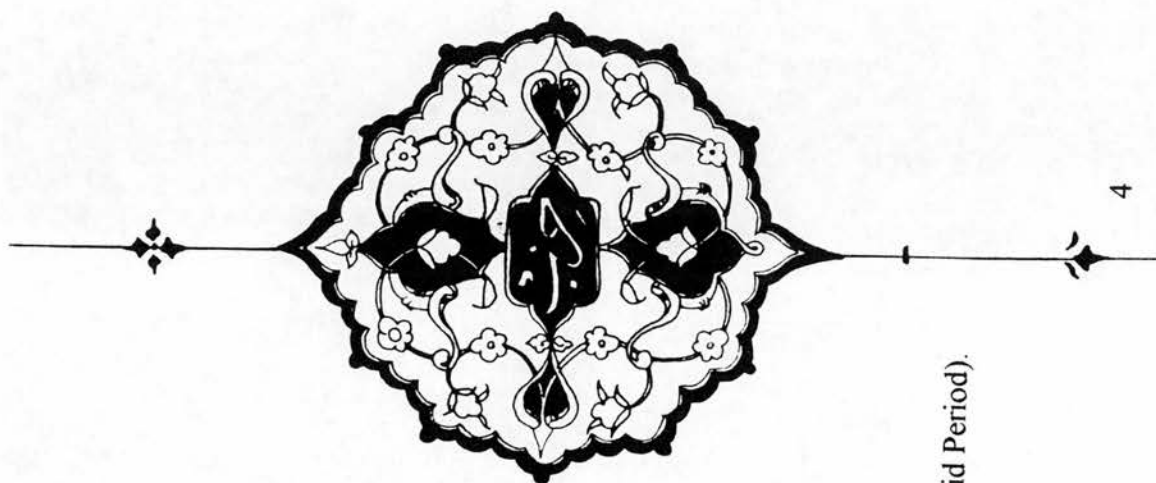
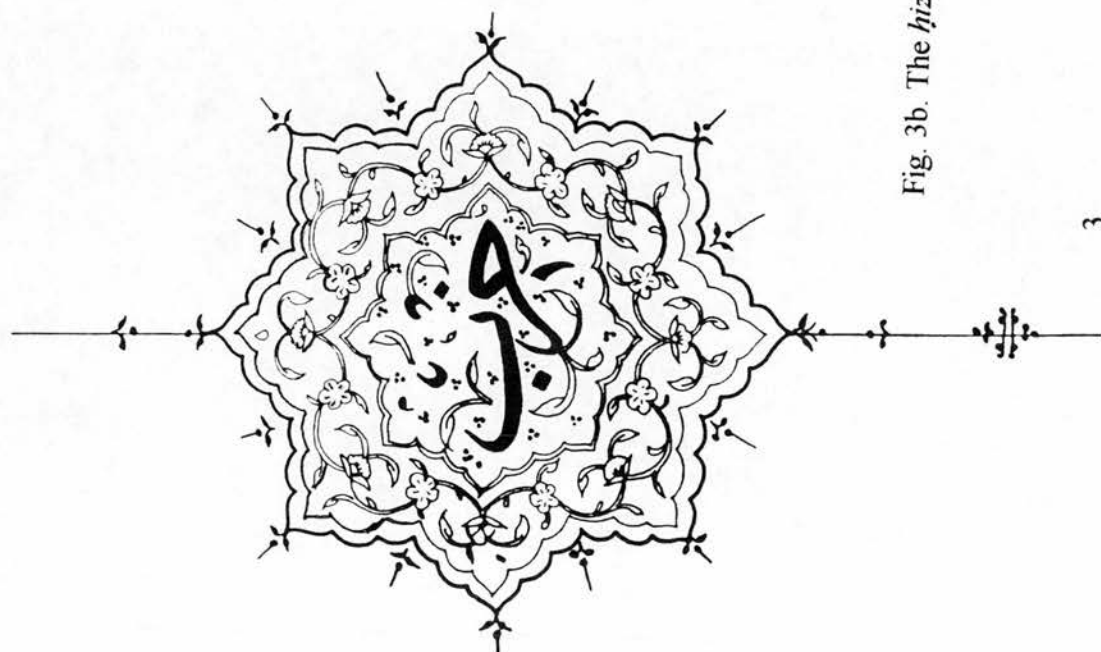


Fig. 3a. The *hizb* design (Pre-Safavid design).

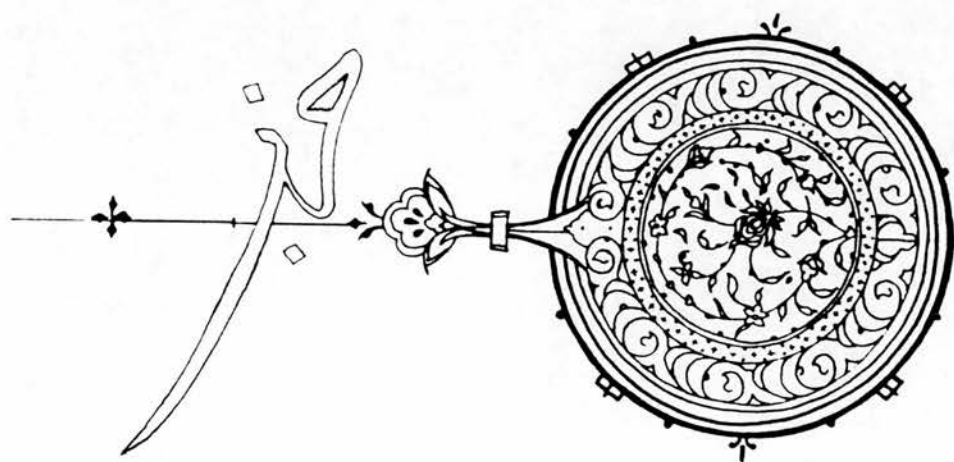


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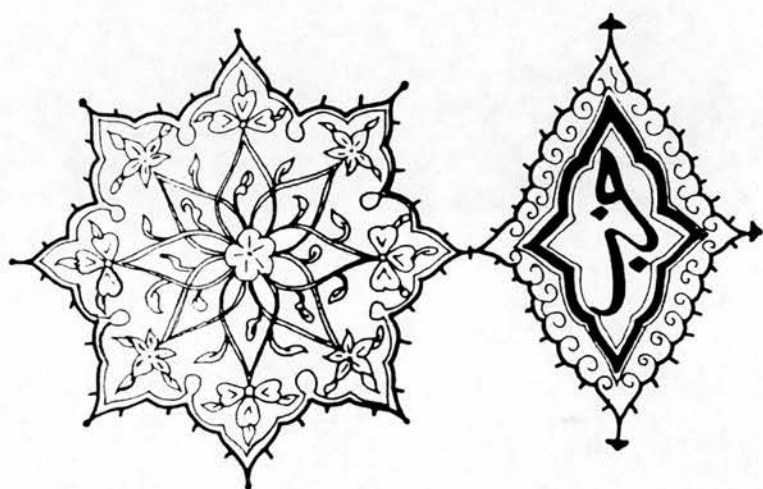


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Fig. 3b. The *hizb* design (Safavid Period).



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6

Fig. 3c. The *hizb* design (Safavid Period).



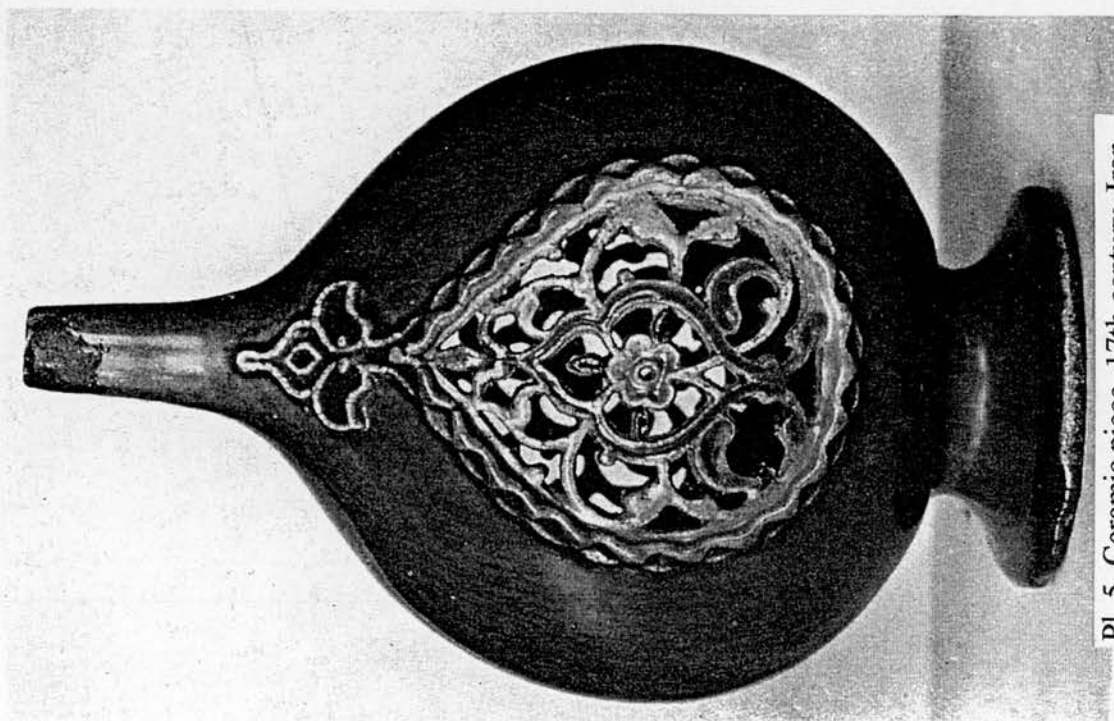
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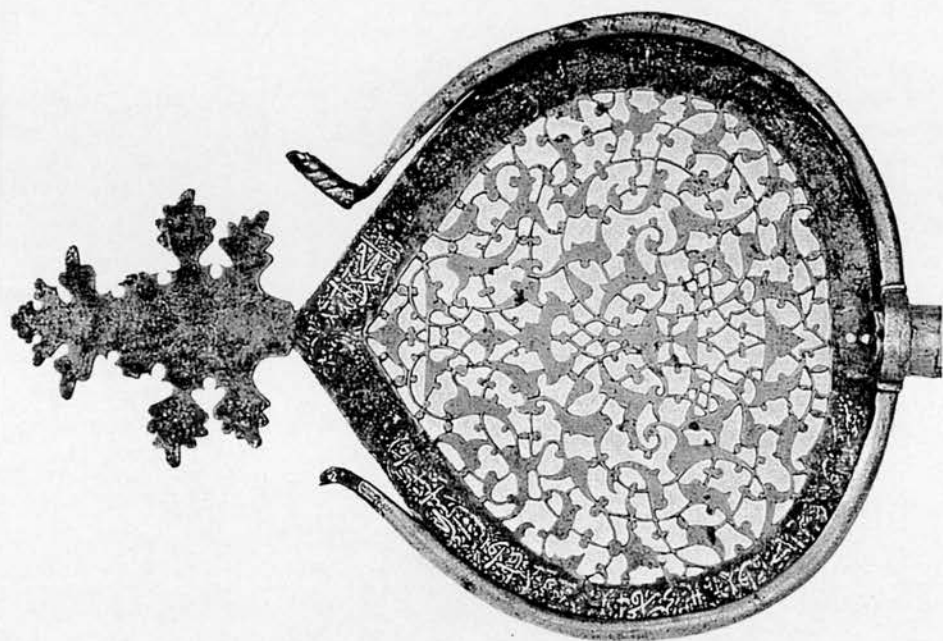
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Fig. 3d. The *hizb* design (Safavid period).





Pl. 5. Ceramic piece. 17th century. Iran.



Pl. 6. Steel standards. 17th century. Iran.



Pl. 7. Metal mortar. Late 12th to early 13th century.

#### 4.1 The *rub<sup>C</sup>* design

The *rub<sup>C</sup>* is one-fourth of a *ḥizb*. In most cases, the word *rub<sup>C</sup>* was written in the margin without decoration. It is very rare to find a decorated *rub<sup>C</sup>* design in Safavid Qur'âns. At least one example is found, in however, the Chester Beatty collection, namely the 17th-century Qur'ân (Fig. 4, no. 1)<sup>56</sup> copied by Shagird and mentioned earlier. The design frame consists of an eight-lobed medallion with four-line frames. Within the frame is a fine scrollwork design that begins from the centre of a flower motif. The word *al-rub<sup>C</sup>* in a rather luminous green colour written clearly at the centre of the frame. The overall design still maintains the concept of balance. In contrast, the *rub<sup>C</sup>* design found in the late Mamlûk period (ca. 1430-1460 A.D.), published by James, shows a rather different mode of aesthetic expression. This design is rather simple as compared with that of the Safavid period (Fig. 4, no. 1 and 2).<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.2 The *nisf* design

The *nisf* design (Figs. 5a, 5b, 5c and 5d) is one-half of a *ḥizb* in the Qur'an. Some examples of the *nisf* design prior to the Safavid period can be seen in Fig. 5a, no. 1<sup>58</sup> and 2.<sup>59</sup> This is a very good example of the inter-relationship of image and meaning in a design. The very fact that the word *nisf* carries the meaning of one-half,

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<sup>56</sup> CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no.174).

<sup>57</sup> Khalili, QUR605. See James, *AT*, p.64, pl.15.

<sup>58</sup> CBL Ms. 1511 (Arberry no.141).

<sup>59</sup> CBL Ms. 1520 (Arberry no.145).

means that the usually complete medallion or escutcheon frame in a marginal design is now being depicted as a half-design. The complete medallion or escutcheon design can be seen as shown in Fig. 2b, no.5 and no.6. Thus there is a double emphasis in the word *niṣf*, this relates both to the meaning of the word itself and to the design which encloses it. By word and by image or visual language, the message is clearly conveyed to the reader. Even if the design is without the written word, the meaning is understood.

This concept of double emphasis in the message predates the Safavid period, but remained in fashion in the 16th-century Safavid Qur'âns. As usual, the Safavid design (in *niṣf* as in other types) is much more elaborate than in earlier centuries. Extra decorative elements were added. For example in Fig. 5b, no.3<sup>60</sup>, the desire for more decoration is plain. The 'base' of the half-design escutcheon frame was added and was given scrollwork and finials or ray-like lines. This device helps to balance the whole composition. The addition of this fine scrollwork decoration at the base of the *niṣf* design heightens its dynamism. The design seems lighter and seems to vibrate with more or less positive negative effect. The design in the earlier period is much heavier and perhaps emphasises stability. It demands all of the space allocated to it in the margin of the Qur'ân. On the other hand, the Safavid *niṣf* design is not as heavy in its effect, and does not sink into the margin space provided.

The Safavid artists of the 17th-century seem to prefer the full medallion-type for their *niṣf* designs. The old formulas or conventions of having the word secured in a full medallion for the marginal design of the Qur'ân seem to make a come-back. Nevertheless, they were presented with grace and attain roughly the same standard as

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<sup>60</sup> CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no.155).

was reached in the 16th-century. The fine inner decoration that is typical of the "Persian school"<sup>61</sup> whereby "the motif is sometimes distributed in bouquets, with all the stems starting from one point"<sup>62</sup> is clearly shown in Fig. 5c, no.5.<sup>63</sup> Quite similar plant motifs are to be found in an embroidery pattern from Isfâhân of the 17th-century.<sup>64</sup>

The Safavid Qur'ân produced in the year 1125/1713 (Fig. 5c, no.6), is a clear indicator of a change in the style of illumination. The *nişf* design seems to foreshadow a decline in Qur'ânic art in the coming centuries. Though still maintaining some basic qualities and concepts of decoration of both 16th and 17th-century type, the *nişf* design is no longer as interesting as before. It tends to get over-crowded or rather over-emphasised (Fig. 5c, no.6).<sup>65</sup> Clearly enough, in Fig. 5d, no.7,<sup>66</sup> no.8<sup>67</sup> and no.9,<sup>68</sup> the *nişf* design is becoming less attractive. The depiction of the plant motif tends to be bold and heavy.

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<sup>61</sup> J. Collin, *La Composition Decorative Arabe*, tr. Sue Budden (Paris, 1995), 10.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no.174).

<sup>64</sup> A. Dowlatshahi, *Persian Designs and Motifs for Artists and Craftsmen* (New York, 1979), 33.

<sup>65</sup> CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no.177).

<sup>66</sup> CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry no.180).

<sup>67</sup> CBL Ms. 1579 (Arberry no.181).

<sup>68</sup> CBL Ms. 1572 (Arberry no.179).



### 4.3 The *thulth* design

Two examples may be cited from the Safavid period. Both are from the same Qur'an produced in the 17th-century by Shagird.<sup>69</sup> In Fig. 6a, the inner part of the *thulth* design comprises a fine plant motif branching out from the centre. The design type is quite similar to a ceramic from Kirman of the same period (see Pl. 8).<sup>70</sup> Another type of *thulth* design found in the same Qur'ân is presented in the escutcheon shape (Fig. 6b), but with a slight difference. The symbol carries the words *al-juz' al-thânî* at the centre. The background design is full of fine line scrollwork with minute flowers and leaves. They were drawn in a symmetrical order, typical of a Persian decorative formula in design.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no.174).

<sup>70</sup> Dimand, *Hand Book*, 150.

<sup>71</sup> C. Humbert, *Islamic Ornamental Design* (London, 1980), 29.



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Fig. 4. The *rub'* design (Safavid period).

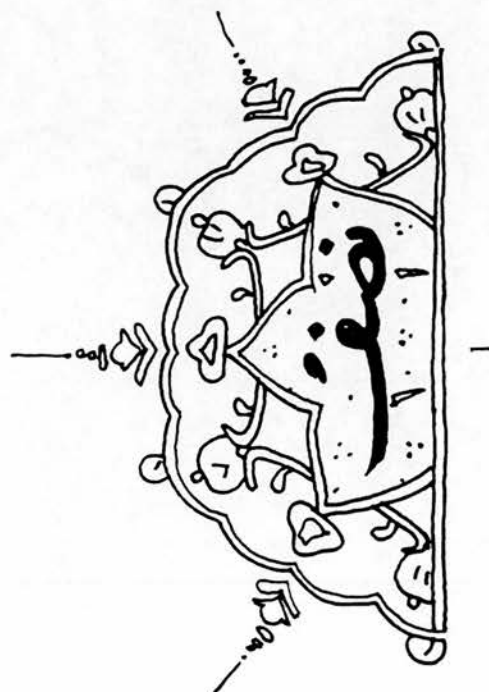


Fig. 5a. The *misf* design (Safavid period).

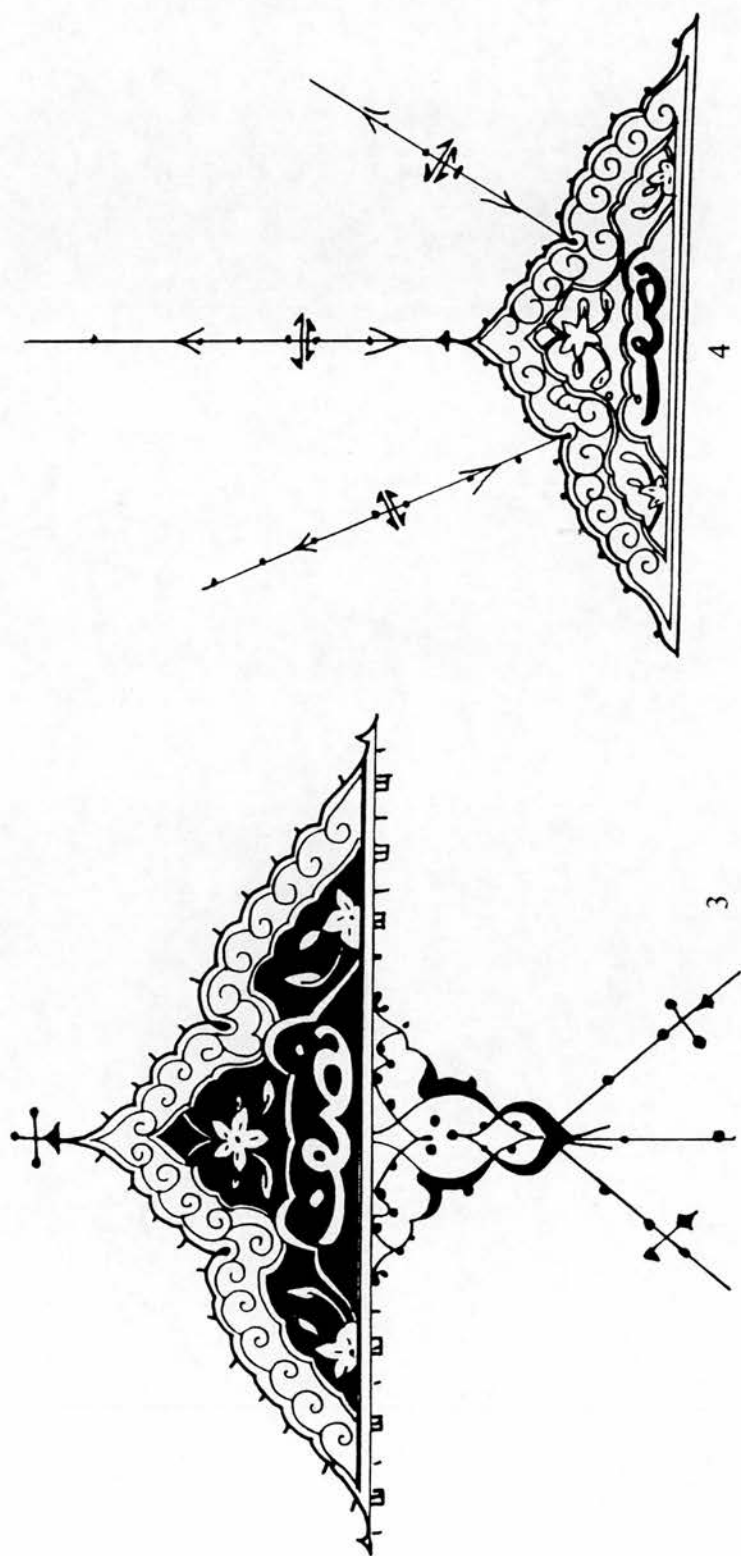


Fig. 5b. The *misf* design (Safavid period).

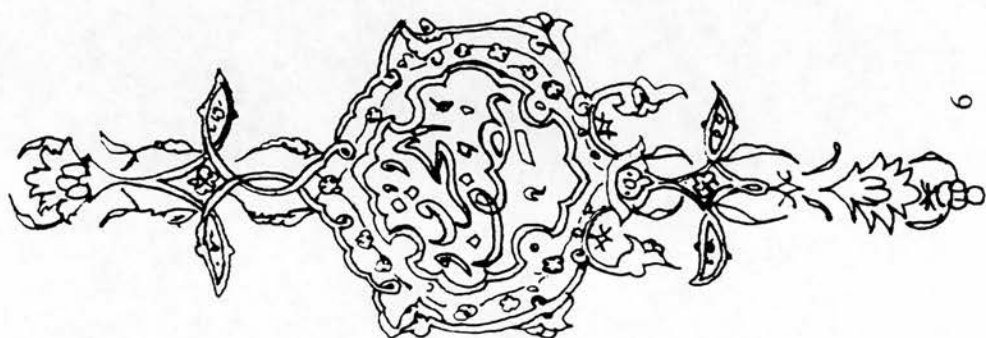
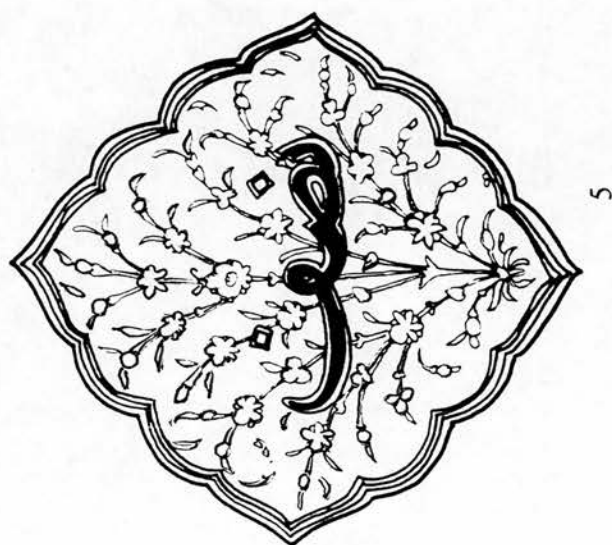


Fig. 5c. The *nisf* design (Safavid period).



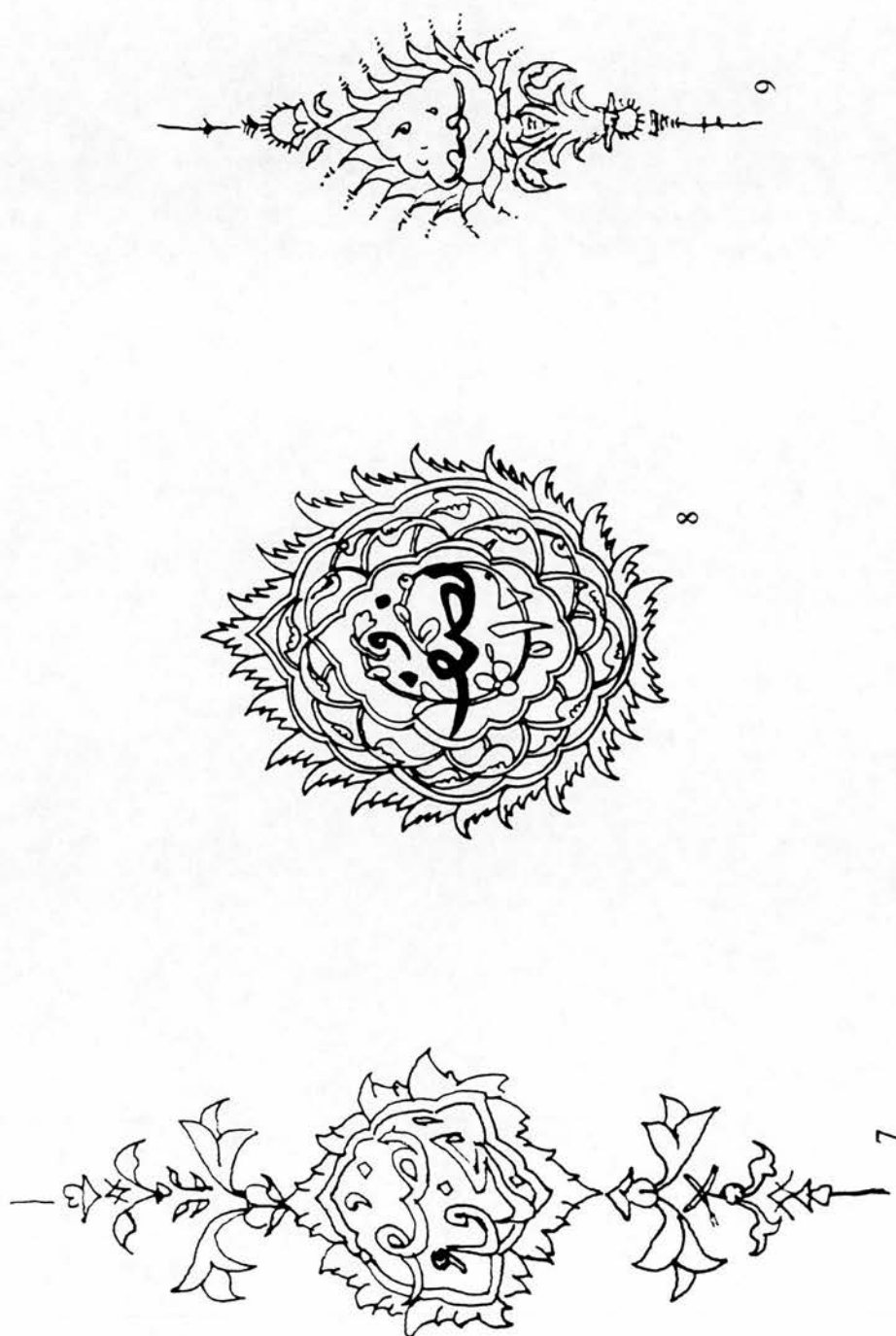
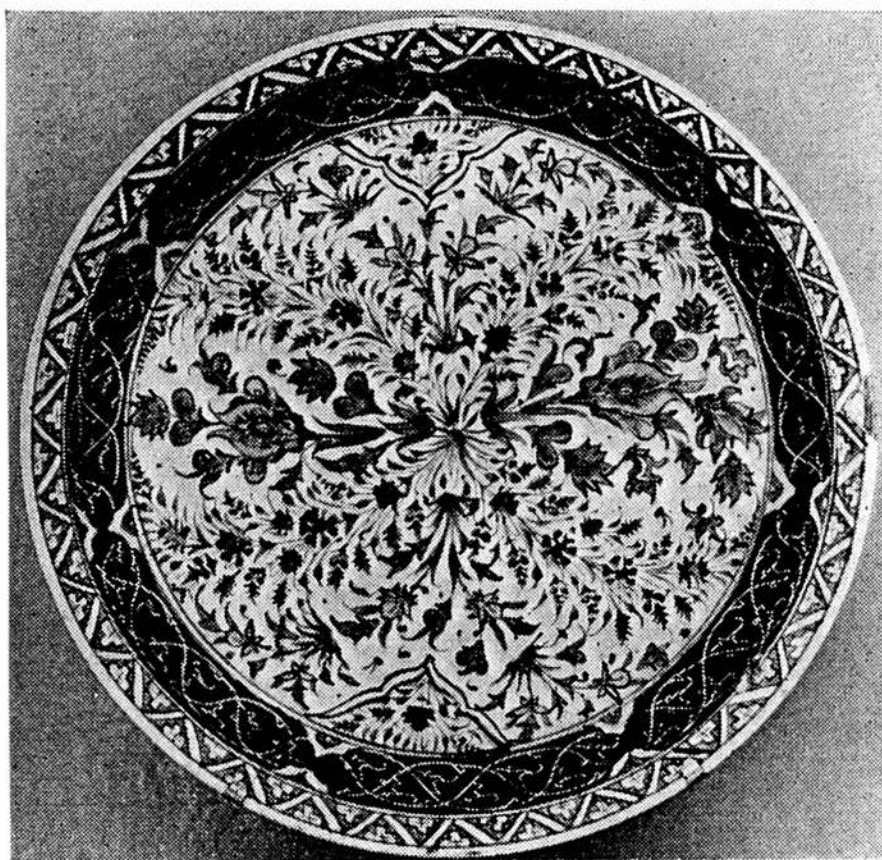


Fig. 5d. The *nisf* design (Safavid design).



Pl. 8. A Ceramic plate from Kirman, 17th-century A.D.

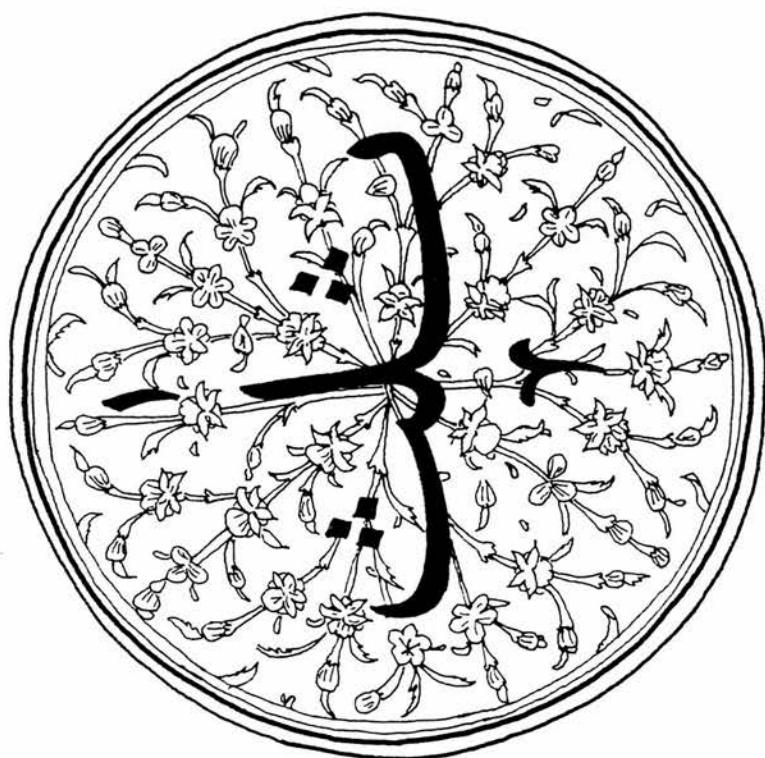


Fig. 6a. The *thulth* design (Safavid period).



Fig. 6b. The *thulth* design (Safavid period).

## 5 The *rukūʿ* design

There are 558 *rukūʿ* in the Qurʾān.<sup>72</sup> Generally, there are approximately 10 *āyāt* per *rukūʿ* mark.<sup>73</sup> It is indicated by the letter *ʿayn* in the margin next to the text. The favourite colour used for this mark is vermilion, sometimes black or blue is used. This mark is quite prominent and is extensively used in the Qurʾān. Very rarely, however, this mark is indicated by a design. If there *is* any design to mark this *rukūʿ*, it will be just the letter *ʿayn* written at the centre of the decorated medallion design. An example of this design type can be seen in the Qurʾān copied by Abū'l-Ḥasan al-ʿUsayli al-Hanafī in the Khalili's collection. According to James, this Qurʾān was probably produced in Cairo, it is dated 969/1561-2 and is of provincial Ottoman type (Fig. 7, no.1).<sup>74</sup> There is also another design type for this *rukūʿ* sign as found in a Qurʾān in the John Rylands collection. Here the letter *ʿayn* was written within a gold spherical frame in the margin (Fig. 7, no.2). According to the colophon, this Qurʾān was copied by Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Husayn ibn Ḥāfiz Muḥammad ʿAfī and is dated 1114/1702. This Qurʾān was brought from India by the late Major Pearson.<sup>75</sup> Amongst Safavid scribes and illuminators, or even to the reciter, the undecorated letter *ʿayn* was probably sufficient to represent the *rukūʿ* mark in the Qurʾān. Since there are so many other marginal designs, an additional decorated *rukūʿ* mark would be liable to make the page look over-decorated. Or, perhaps, it might make it visually too demanding and thus be in danger of outweighing the importance of the text.

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<sup>72</sup> Ali, *Qurʾān*, 81.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Khalili, QUR627. See James, *AT*, 238.

<sup>75</sup> A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library Manchester* (Manchester, 1934), 48.

Illumination must be secondary to the text. According to Lings, illumination that is too pronounced is against the principles of Qur'ân illumination.<sup>76</sup> There will be visual confusion for the reader when the decorative aspect is emphasised over the text itself. Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why only two types of marginal design are permitted, namely the *khamsah* and the *asharah* marks in the margin.

## 6. The *khamsah* and the *asharah* designs

After the individual *ayah* marker, there are also groups of *âyât* which are separately indicated in the Qur'ân. These groups are known as the *khamsah* markers (for every fifth *ayah*) and, following it, the *asharah* markers (for every tenth *ayah*).<sup>77</sup> They were indicated in the form of a symbol, a letter, a word or a medallion with a word in it. These markers can either be found within the text or indicated in the margin. The origin of this method of grouping five and ten *âyât* is not known.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Lings, *QACI*, 75.

<sup>77</sup> Khatibi & Sijelmassi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 158. See James, *QB*, 10.

<sup>78</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 22.



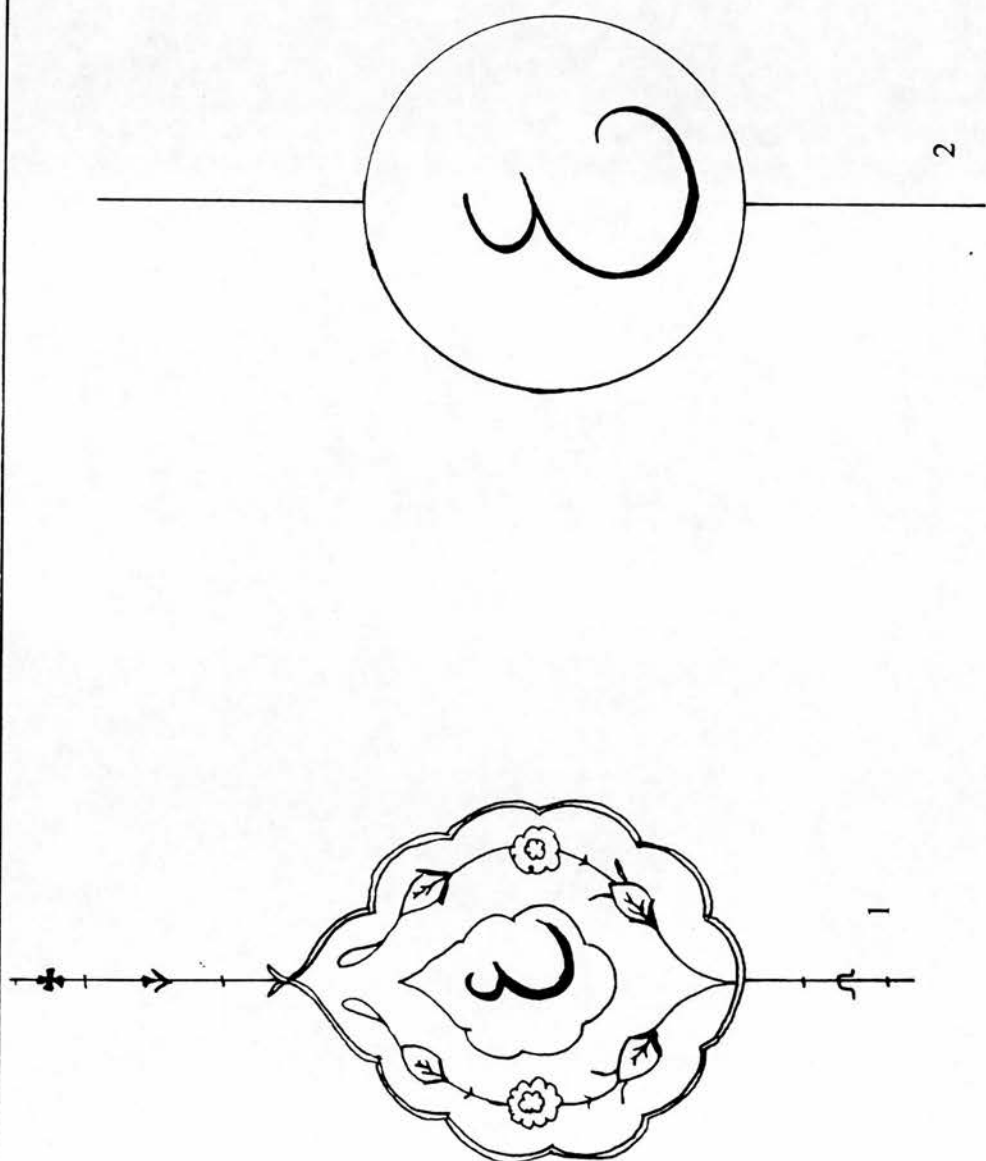


Fig. 7. The *rukū*<sup>c</sup> design.

## 6.1. The pre-Safavid designs

### Before 1000

Prior to the 10th century A.D.,<sup>79</sup> the *khamsah* and *asharah* markers were indicated within the text. There are at least two different types of markers for the five (*khamsah*) *âyât* and five different groups of designs for the ten (*asharah*) *âyât*.<sup>80</sup> The two different types of *khamsah* markers comprise the *abjad* system and the *abjad* system with ornament. An example of the *abjad* system is the use of the Kufic letter "ḥâ'" to represent the fifth *âyah* marker.<sup>81</sup> An example of this can be seen in a fragment of a Near Eastern Qur'ân of *juz* ' 17 in the Chester Beatty collection, dated 298/911.<sup>82</sup> As for the *abjad* system with ornament, there are at least two types. First, the letter *hâ'* written in a pear-shaped ornament as shown in folio 2a of a fragment of a Qur'ân of the mid-9th-century A.D. in the Khalili collection.<sup>83</sup> Second, the ornamented letter *alif* can be seen in a fragment of a Qur'ân datable to the second half of the 8th century A.D. or the early 9th century, also in the Khalili collection.<sup>84</sup> As for the *asharah* markers, they are varieties of geometric designs as illustrated by Déroche in his studies.<sup>85</sup> The basic shape used for the *asharah* mark is a circle.

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<sup>79</sup> An overview of the different ornamental devices used to mark the *âyât* in the Qur'ân, as a help for recitation can be found in the studies conducted by Déroche in *AT*.

<sup>80</sup> Déroche identified at least five groups of *asharah* markers found in pre 10th-century Qur'âns. See Déroche, *AT*, pp.23 and 25.

<sup>81</sup> See Khatibi & Sijelmassi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 143.

<sup>82</sup> CBL Ms. 1421 (Arberry no. 16). See James, *QB*, pl.7.

<sup>83</sup> KFQ43. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.35.

<sup>84</sup> KFQ50. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.4.

<sup>85</sup> There at least twenty different designs for *asharah* *âyât* marks found in Qur'âns

Gradually, this circle developed into variants of rosettes written within the text. Sometimes, one can also find square as well as quadrangular-shaped *asharah* marks in the Qur'ân. The square shape for the *asharah* mark can be seen in 9th-century Qur'ân from Iraq or Persia in the Nurosmaniye Mosque Library, in Istanbul.<sup>86</sup> On the other hand the quadrangular-shaped *asharah* mark is found in a Qur'ân from Palermo dated 372/982-3.<sup>87</sup>

## After 1000

### Ornamented words

Gradually, these letter-type symbols were replaced by three different types of *ayah* markers indicated in the margin of the text. These different types (*khamsah* and *asharah*) are: ornamented markers or symbols containing (Figs. 8a, 8b and 8c), symbols that consist solely of ornament; and word markers consisting solely of writing. The first type ornamented word markers — can best be seen in the Qur'ân copied by 'Alî ibn al-Bawwâb in Baghdad dated 391/1001.<sup>88</sup> These ornamented words *khamsah* and *asharah* — represent one of the earliest designs and continue to develop in multiple styles up to the Safavid period. The ornamented word symbols of the 14th century (Fig. 8a, nos.1 to 4 and Fig. 8b, nos.5 to 8), were rather bold, with

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of the Abbasid tradition and illustrated by Déroche. See Déroche, *AT*, 25.

<sup>86</sup> Istanbul, Nurosmaniye Library, 27, ff.154v-155r. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.3. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.41.

<sup>87</sup> Khalili, QUR261, QUR368. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.81.

<sup>88</sup> CBL Ms. 1431. See James, *QB*, pl.18. See Khatibi & Sijelmassi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, pp.140-143.

strong organic and geometric lines. These are uncomplicated simple margin designs. If when we compare them with 15th-century designs (Fig. 8c, no.9 and no.10), these seem much less weighty and more refined in their line drawing. They also suggest that many man-hours were involved in order to produce such an elegant design. Furthermore, the 14th-century *khamsah* and *asharah* designs seem to obey a different basic structure in terms of their design. The *asharah* design does not follow the *khamsah* design. This suggests that they are not connected but, in the case of the 15th-century design, they are. A similar basic structure as shown in (Figs. 8c, nos.9 and 10) was used, and this made the designs look as if they belonged to the same group or style. These designs were depicted consistently and so they can be distinguished automatically.

### Ornamented symbols

Next come the ornamented symbols without the word *khamsah* and *asharah* at the centre as shown in Figs. 8d, 8e and 8f. More or less similar principles were used in these ornamented symbols. The pre-15th-century designs seem to have matured into their own style (Fig. 8d, nos.11-14 and in Fig. 8e, nos. 15-16). There is not much distinction between these symbols. Both designs, to a certain extent, have the same basic structure. But this situation gradually change by the 15th century. The artists began vividly to portray some quickly recognisable patterns. These recognisable patterns were established right from the very beginning of the first *sûrah* in the Qur'ân. The reader will thus be made familiar with these symbols or markers as he reads the text. Once these designs are established, the rest will be easy and there will be no confusion. There are some distinct patterns or marks to differentiate them. For example, initially, both have an identical basic spherical frame structure with internal

plant motifs. But later, one of them has a vertical line extended from a lotus-bud motif at the top and bottom of the spherical frame, while the other does not have this feature. Furthermore, these designs are simpler and more relaxed than the pre-15th-century designs. These ornamented symbols (Fig. 8f, nos. 23 and 24) fulfilled both the decorative and the functional needs of the Qur'ân. These designs thus fulfilled the function for which they were made.<sup>89</sup>

### Words in the margin

Last but not least, there are also examples of coloured (blue and gold) words (*khamsah* and *asharah*), without ornaments written in the margin. They are very straightforward indicators for the fifth and tenth *âyah* in the Qur'ân written in the margin. This system can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Yâqût al-Mustasimî, dated 686/1287 in Baghdad,<sup>90</sup> and continued to be used until the Safavid period.

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<sup>89</sup> See M. Aminrazavi, "Aesthetic Experience in Islamic Art," in *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture* 29/4 (1985), 37.

<sup>90</sup> Mashhad Shrine Library, 120. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.28.



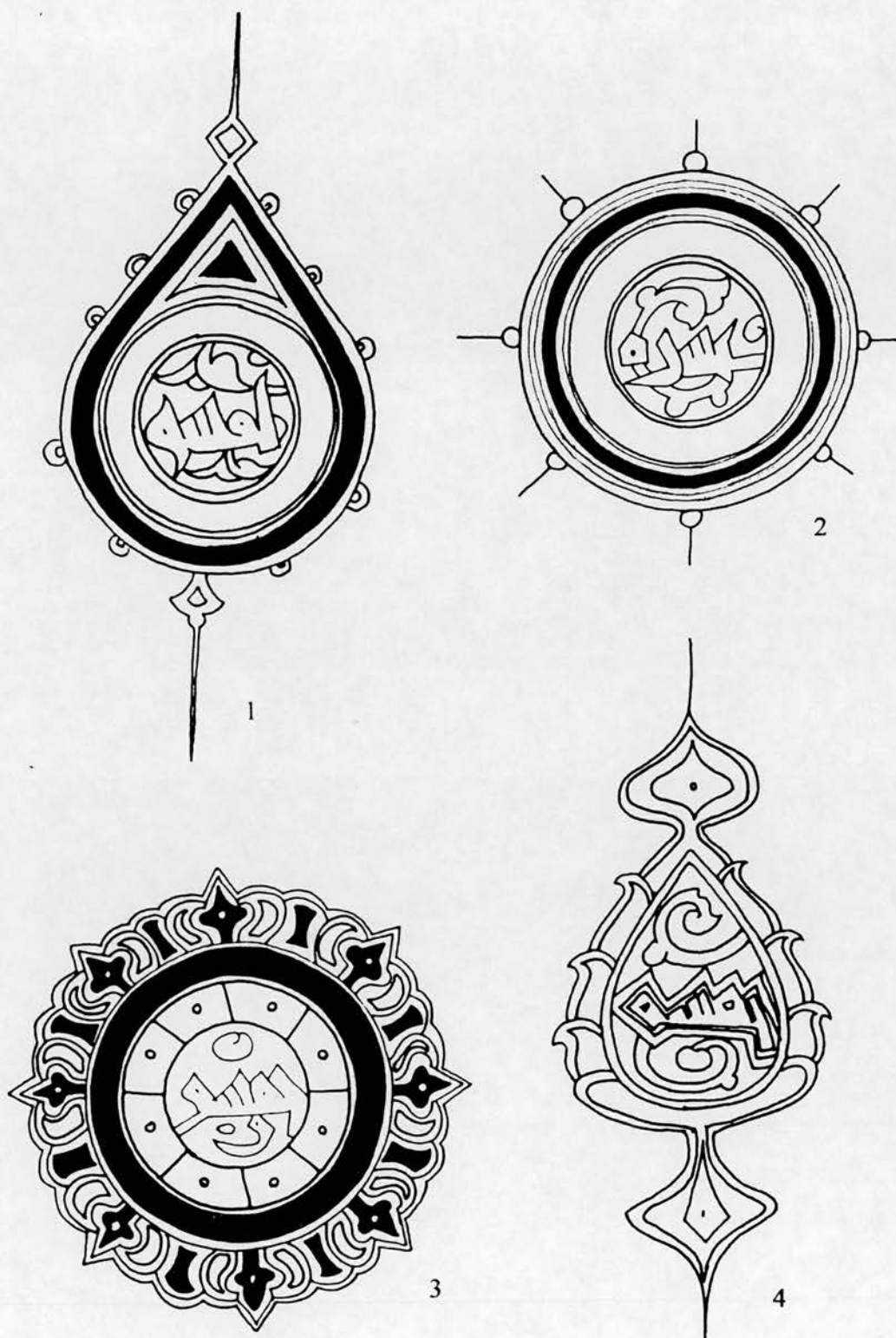


Fig. 8a. The *khamsah* and *'asharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).



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Fig. 8b. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).



Fig. 8c. The *khamseh* and *ʿasharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).



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Fig. 8d. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).

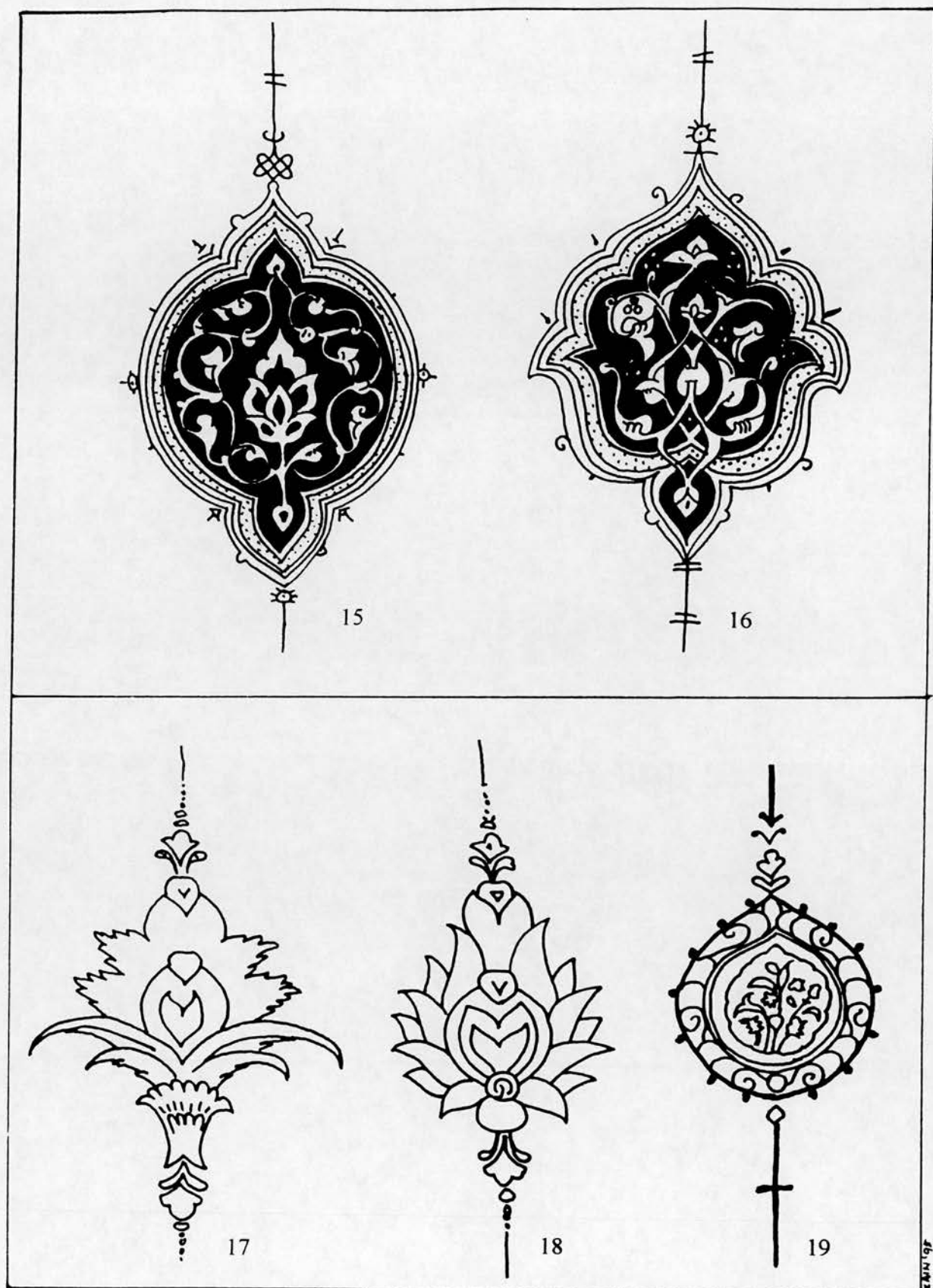


Fig. 8e. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).



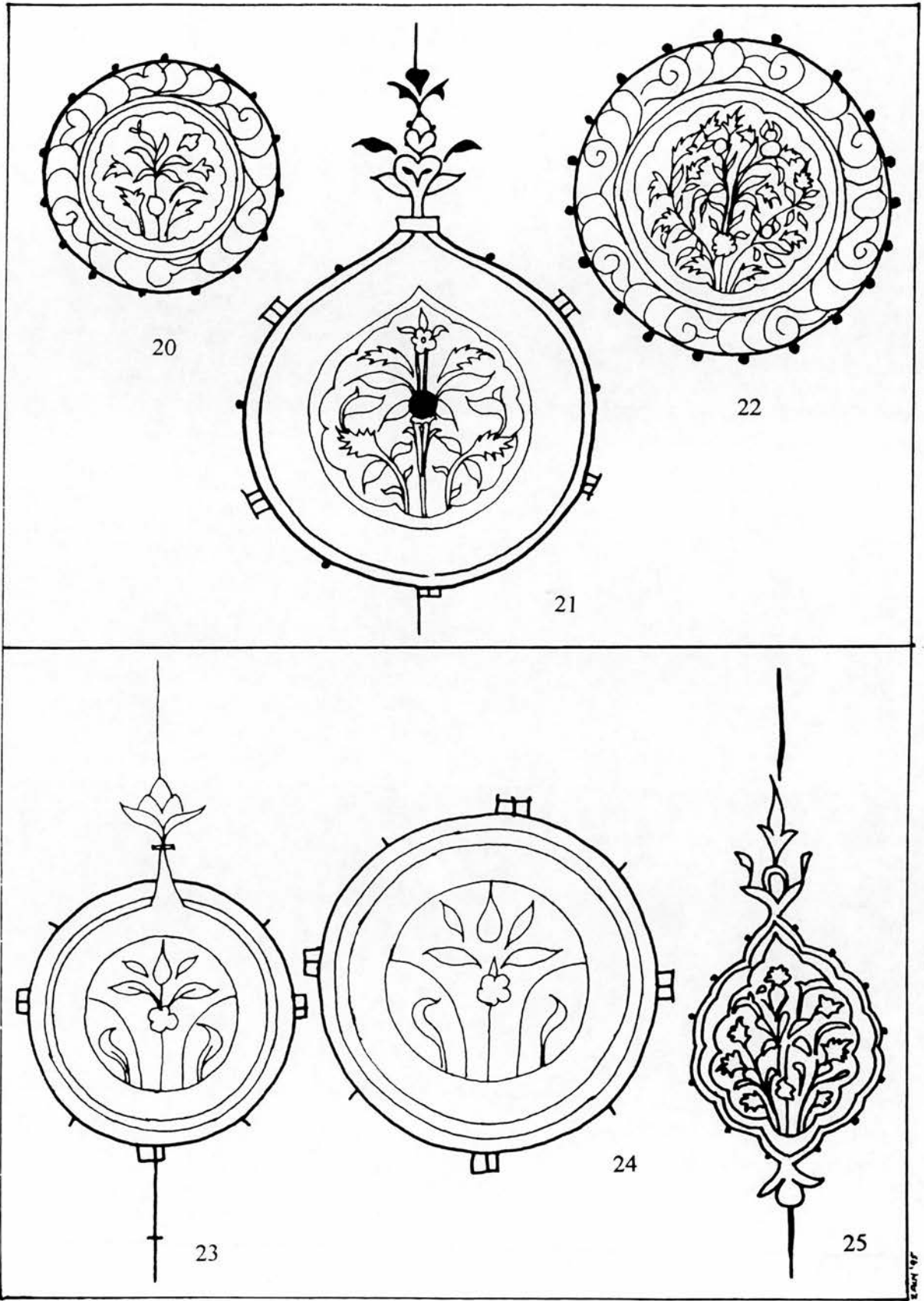


Fig. 8f. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Pre-Safavid period).

## 6.2. The Safavid designs

### Innovations

In the Safavid period, traces of earlier formulae can be detected in the *khamsah* and *asharah* designs. The Safavid artists are innovative enough at creating their own designs (Figs. 9a, 9b, 9c and 9d). The designs in 16th-century Qur'âns (Fig. 9b, no.7 and no.8) was quite similar to the design of 15th-century Qur'âns (Fig. 8c, no. 9 and no.10). Similar types of cloud scroll motif<sup>91</sup> were found. The only difference in Safavid Qur'âns is that the internal floral design is much elaborate than in their predecessors. Everything seems to follow a system of free-flowing arabesques<sup>92</sup> and flow according to a stipulated structure or pattern. Hence the use of a spherical frame structure, a spherical cloud scroll, a spherical plant scroll and of course the adaptability of the script (the word *khamsah* and *asharah*) within the design. There is also evidence of the adaptation of design formulae in these *khamsah* and *asharah* designs. What used to be the formula for ornamented symbols alone (i.e. without the word *khamsah* and *asharah*) in 15th-century Qur'âns (Fig. 8f, nos. 23 and 24), is now applied to ornamented symbols with words in 16th-century Qur'âns (Fig. 9a, Pls. 9 and 10).

### Types of *âyah* marking

Other than the common spherical frame structures for the *khamsah* and *asharah* designs, there are also other examples such as the escutcheon-shaped, the

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<sup>91</sup> James, *AT*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art and Archeology*, 24.

lotus-shaped and the star-shaped design (Figs. 9c and 9d). These shapes comprise fine ray-like lines or finials (Fig. 9c, no.9, 10 and Fig. 9d, no.12). According to Lings, these finial lines symbolise light and thus carry a deeper meaning relating to the Qur'ân itself.<sup>93</sup> Sometimes, as in earlier centuries, the word *asharah* is written by the side of the medallion. This is another way of indicating the ten *âyât* already recited (Fig. 9d, no.12). The use of such a medallion can be simply a matter of choice on the part of the artist. He can write the word either on the medallion itself or outside the medallion. On the other hand, perhaps the medallion was an afterthought. Parallels for this design in other media include the design type found on the wall of a pigeon tower at Linjân, near Pîr-i Bakrân<sup>94</sup> (Pl. 11), which is reminiscent of the marginal design type of the Safavid Qur'ân. Pigeon towers are commonly found near royal capitals such as Isfâhân and Herât.<sup>95</sup> Since, such royal capitals were centres for the arts, it is highly probable that the dissemination of ideas and the distribution of design books moved from established masters<sup>96</sup> to less professional craftsmen. Perhaps, this design type (a plant motif) symbolises the concept of growth. According to Iqbal, nature is a symbol and an *âyah* from God.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps through knowledge of the Qur'ân and of

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<sup>93</sup> Lings, *QACI*, 74; See Lings, *Symbol*, pp.132-136.

<sup>94</sup> See E. Beazley in his chapter on 'Some Vernacular Buildings of the Plateau', in *The Arts of Persia*, ed. R. W. Ferrier (New Haven & London, 1989), 110.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>96</sup> R. Grousset, *The Civilizations of the East* (London, 1931), 381.

<sup>97</sup> A. W. Halepota, "The Holy Qur'ân as The Book 'Umm-ul-Kîtâb'," *Islamic Studies* 22/2 (1983), 6. See Ernst, "The Spirit of Islamic Calligraphy: Bâbâ Shâh Isfahânî's *Âdâb al-mashq*", pp.279-286. See also, "Risâla-i âdâb al-mashq az Bâbâ Shâh Isfahânî," in *Maqâlât-i Mawlavi Muhammad Shafi*, ed. Ahmad Rabbâni (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqâ-Adab, n.d. [1967]), pp.247-75; the article originally appeared in the *Oriental College Magazine* 101 (1950).

the 'hidden book' (nature), Muslim artists can express symbolic meaning through plant motifs, which are of course abundantly mentioned in the Qur'ân.<sup>98</sup>

Another type of 5 — or 10 — *âyat* marking was the mixture of pure symbol and an ornamented medallion with the appropriate word. Both *khamsah* and *asharah* were carefully differentiated by their designs and were arranged alternately in the margin. The word *khamsah* may be replaced by plant scroll motifs or by an ornamented medallion. The meaning of this medallion will then be understood, even without the presence of the written word *khamsah*. This is because the wordless ornamented medallion is so to speak supported by the next ornamented medallion in the margin, which does have the word *asharah*. This system of alternate arrangement can be found consistently throughout this particular Qur'ân. Plate 12, no.1 and no.2 are two examples taken from the same Qur'ân.<sup>99</sup> This technique is similar to the "show and tell" technique commonly used in the illustration of comics.<sup>100</sup> In this system, a repeated symbol used in intervals which carry a specific message. This method recalls the concept of 'repetition' proposed by Isma'îl and Lamyâ' al-Fârûqî as the fourth characteristic of the aesthetic expression of *tawhîd* in Islamic art.<sup>101</sup> This concept of repetition is not a new phenomenon in the Qur'ân. The messages in the Qur'ân were actually presented in repetition. Thus this concept may be directly based on the model which already existed in the Qur'ân itself.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> See M. I. Husain Farooqi, *Plants of The Qur'ân* (Lucknow: Publisher, 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Khalili, QUR441, Shiraz, ca. 1525-1550 A.D.

<sup>100</sup> Scott Mc Cloud's illustrative theory on "show and tell" in his book *Understanding Comics: The Invincible Art* (New York, 1993), is perhaps functioning on a similar principle of the effectiveness of giving meaning by visual means.

<sup>101</sup> al-Fârûqî & al-Fârûqî, *Cultural*, pp.165-168.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.



Lastly there are the purely ornamental and epigraphic medallions symbolising *khamsah* and *ʿasharah*. These are placed in the margin (Pl. 13, no. 1 and no. 2;<sup>103</sup> Pl. 14, no. 1 and no. 2;<sup>104</sup> and Pl. 15<sup>105</sup>). These medallions are 'symbol specific' rather than 'word specific'.<sup>106</sup> Each medallion has its own standard meaning which is achieved by virtue of its design. Both the *khamsah* medallion and the *ʿasharah* medallion are interdependently placed in the margin. At first glance, if one is unfamiliar with the division of the text, one might mistake them for mere marginal decoration with no specific meaning. In fact, however, these medallions are an example of form following meaning.<sup>107</sup> The artist, when copying the Qur'ân decided what design or medallion should precede the other in the margin, and the pattern of marking groups of *âyat* continues throughout that particular Qur'ân. These predetermined abstract symbols<sup>108</sup> were aesthetically pleasing to the eye of the reciter. Such marginal symbols harmonise with the decorative *âyah* markers within the text itself (Pl. 15). The overall design portrays a subtle harmony<sup>109</sup> which satisfies the

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<sup>103</sup> Khalili, QUR441, Shiraz, ca. 1525-1550 A.D.

<sup>104</sup> Khalili, QUR231, Shiraz or Qazvin, 16th-century A.D.

<sup>105</sup> Khalili, QUR422, Shiraz, 972/1564-5.

<sup>106</sup> The term 'symbol specific' means that the concentration is on the medallion alone without the presence of the written words *khamsah* and *ʿasharah* at the centre of the medallion. On the other hand, the term 'word specific' signifies the written word *khamsah* and *ʿasharah* without any decoration.

<sup>107</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Note on the Philosophy of Persian Art," *Ars Islamica* 15-16 (1951), 126. See also J. M. Rogers, "The Genesis of Safawid Religious Painting," *Iran* Vol. 8 (1970), 126.

<sup>108</sup> Vreeland, "Iran", 284.

<sup>109</sup> To Hillenbrand, precisely, Persian painting (secular painting) is a "subtle art". This is also true as in the case of the Qur'ânic art. See Hillenbrand, *Imperial Images*, 8. See also Ettinghausen, 'Abri Painting' in *Islamic Art and Archaeology*, 348.



reader in terms of both its beauty and its meaning.<sup>110</sup> In Pl. 15, the *khamsah* mark is indicated by the dark blue escutcheon shape medallion, while for the *asharah* mark the artist used a star-shaped medallion in gold. This method of marginal design is commonly found during the Safavid period. Some examples of Safavid Qur'âns in the Khalili collection, illustrated by James, originate from centres as different as Shîrâz, Qazwin and Herât but all share this feature.<sup>111</sup> This suggests the existence of a stylistic convention which operated in the first half of the 16th century in Iran. These margin marks are in the style of the master calligrapher Ruzbihan from Shîrâz, as mentioned by Qâdî Ahmad in the *Gulistân-i humar*.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, according to Budaq Qazwînî, who visited Shîrâz in the 16th century, all the procedures of book production were undertaken by small family businesses and Shîrâz was the centre of book production.<sup>113</sup> Most likely, Qur'âns were produced in large quantities from this centre and may thence have been distributed to other parts of the country.

Figs. 9e to 9j are some examples of ornamental marginal symbols or medallions in Safavid Qur'âns. They are placed in pairs, the *khamsah* on the right and the *asharah* on the left. There is a slight difference between these two designs. Generally, the *khamsah* design has a lotus-bud motif at the top of the medallion and there is no such motif on the *asharah* medallion. Sometimes, in other Qur'âns, it can be the other way round. The circular medallion seems the most popular type, followed

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<sup>110</sup> A. Bahnassi, "The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art," *The Islamic Quarterly* 26/1-4 (1982), 84.

<sup>111</sup> See James, *AT*, pp. 113-213. See also E. Kühnel, *Islamic Art* (London, 1970), 24.

<sup>112</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 67.

<sup>113</sup> James, *AT*, 145.

by the escutcheon, the star and the lotus medallion. The preference for a circular medallion could suggest the use of a simple standard instrument for the speedy production of Qur'âns. This could either be in the form of a simple stamping tool or a ruler with different sizes of holes in it that was used by the artist. Furthermore, any elaborate decoration within the medallion (Fig. 9e) could mean a much higher cost of production as compared to the simple design (Fig. 9g). Some pointers for an expensive Qur'ân can be detected in the use of a fine line cloud scroll motif, the very fine rhythmic plant scroll or arabesque and the number of flowers, as well as the range of colours used in the medallion. Above all, one can easily sense the degree of skill which naturally reflects work of an expert, and this points to a well-financed workshop or one under powerful patronage. Such a workshop need not necessarily be royal<sup>114</sup> but could involve religious intellectuals, *'ulamâ'* or "men of the pen,"<sup>115</sup> and might suggest a strong family tradition.<sup>116</sup> Artistic standards in the production of illuminated books could also be transferred from a royal workshop to merchants' workshops during the Safavid period.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> B. Shoshan, "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam," *Studia Islamica* 53 (1991), 72.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>116</sup> Atil, *Islamic Art and Patronage*, pp.50-53.

<sup>117</sup> *Op. cit.*, 76. See also Pope, *Persian Art*, 225.

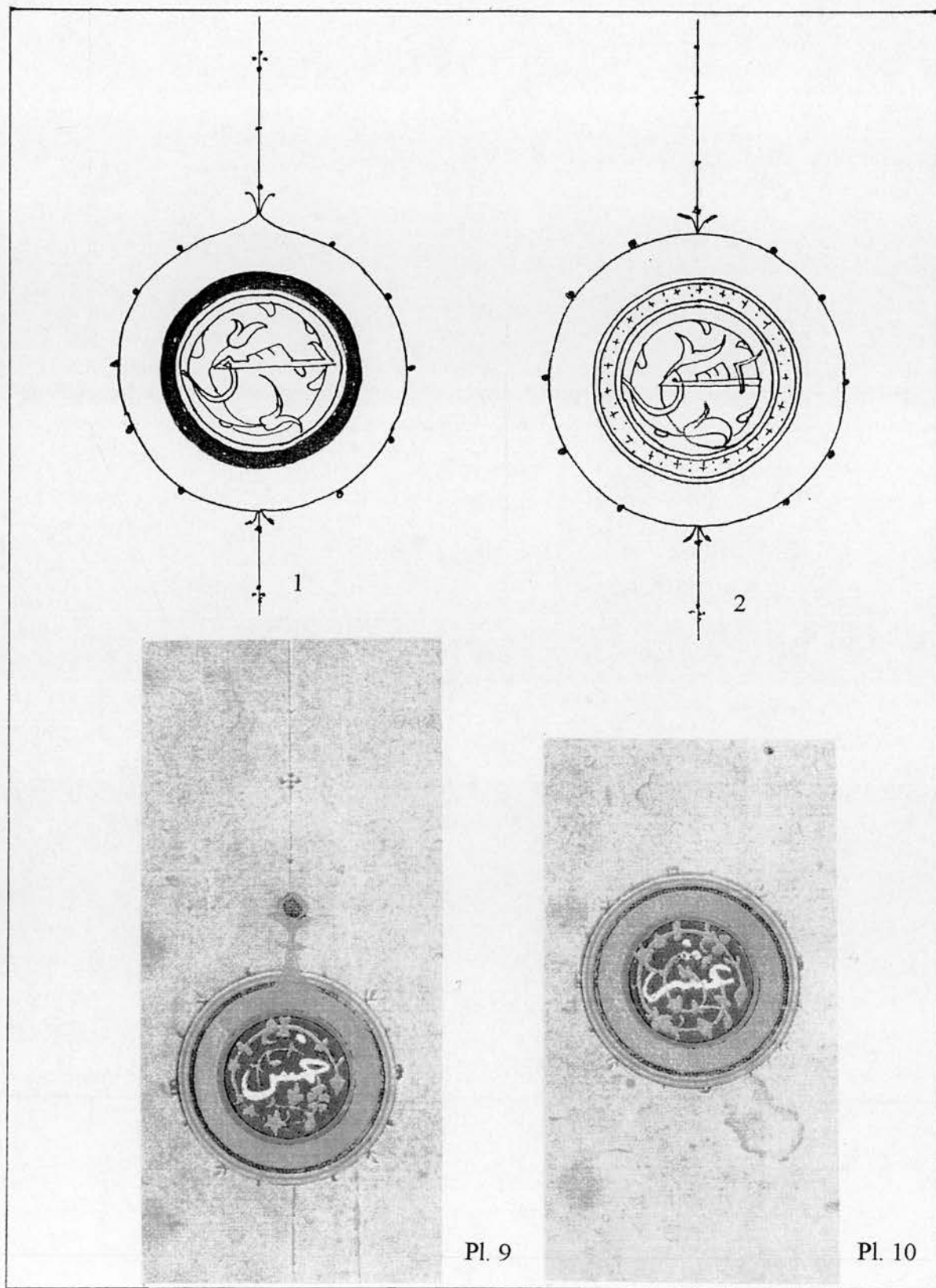


Fig. 9a. The written symbols of *khamsah* and *ʿasharah* (Safavid period).  
 Pl. 9 & 10. The written symbols of *khamsah* and *ʿasharah*.  
 Khalili, QUR729. Dated: 959/1552. Shîrâz or Qazwin.

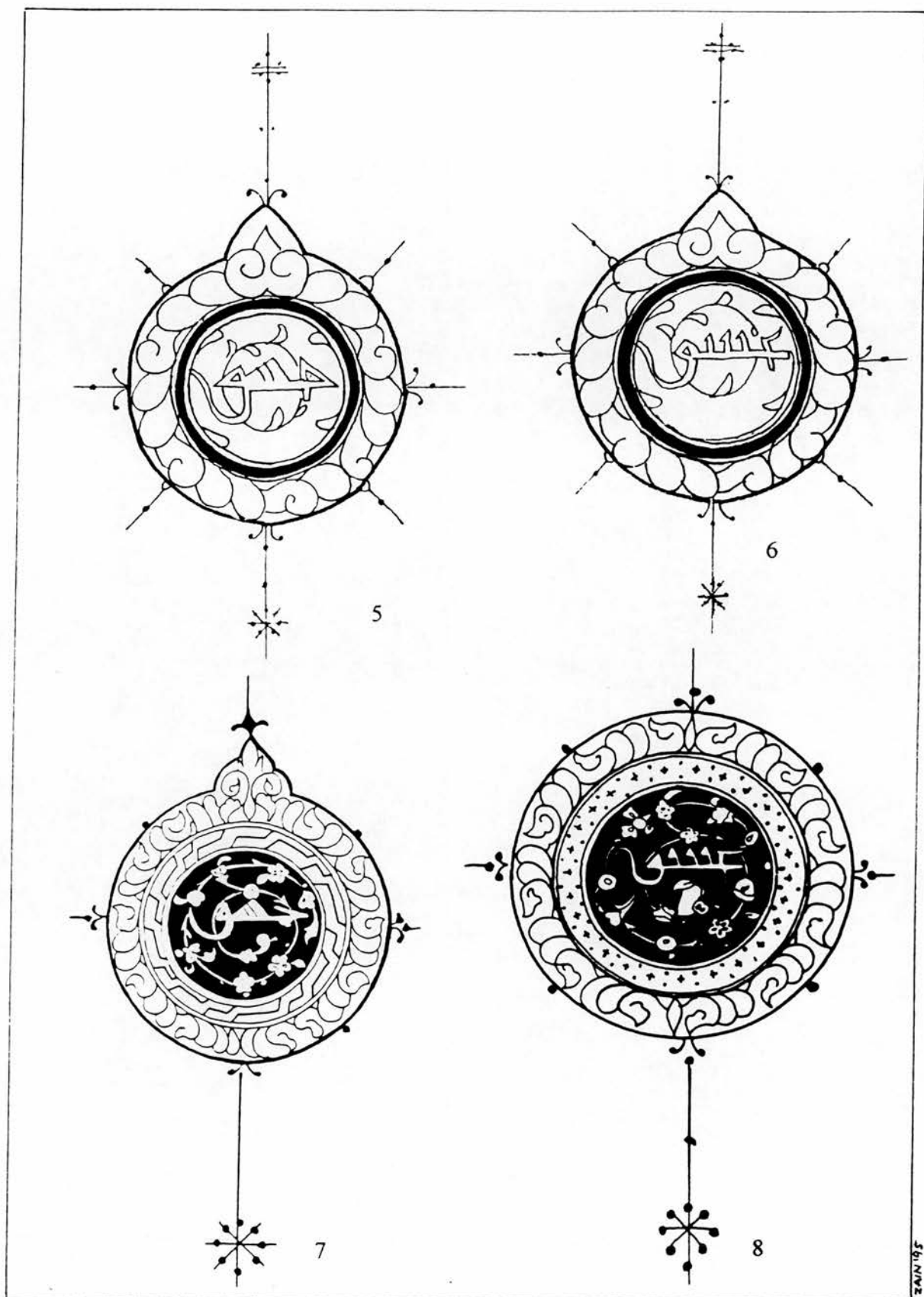


Fig. 9b. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Safavid period).

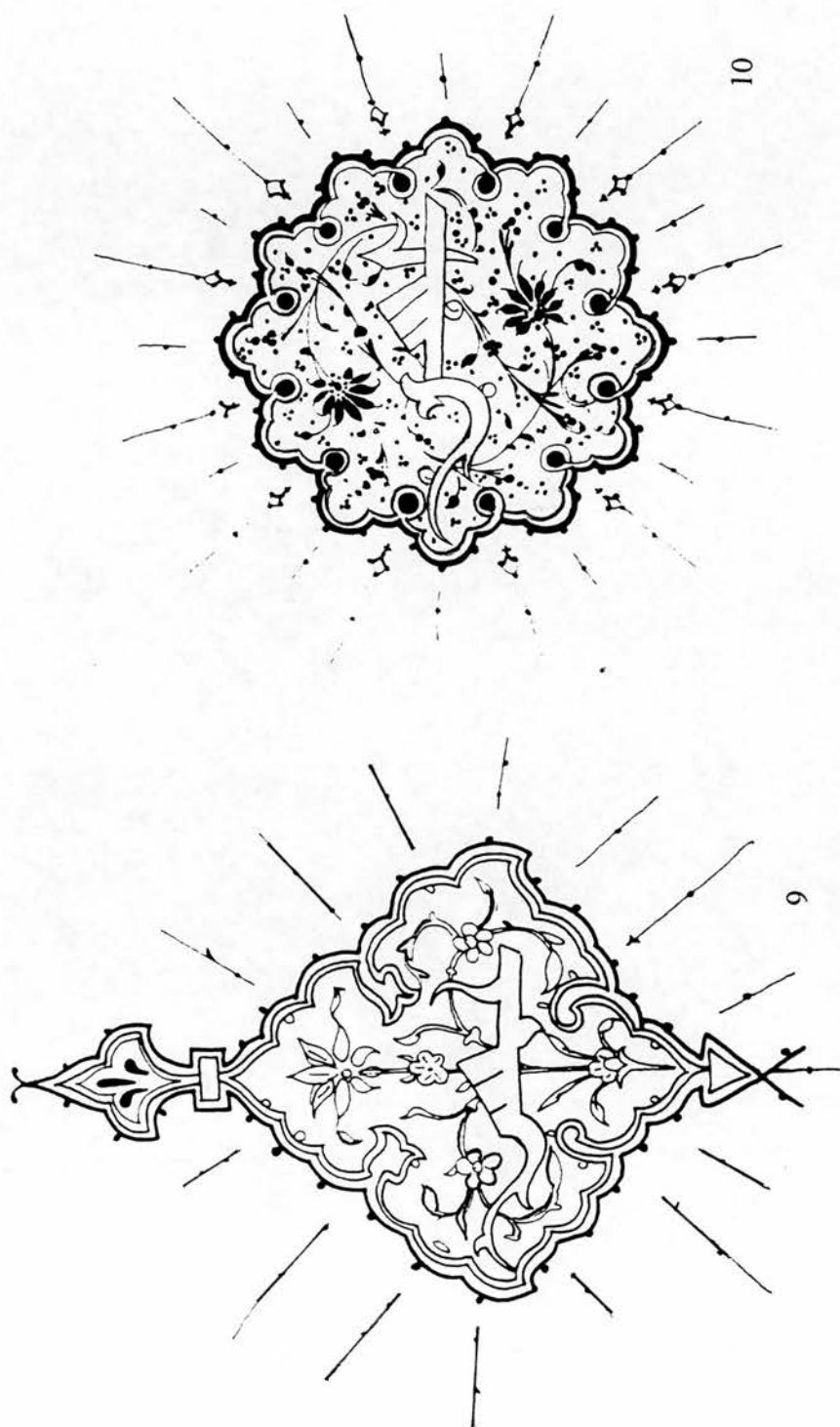


Fig. 9c. The *khamsah* and *‘asharah* designs (Safavid period).



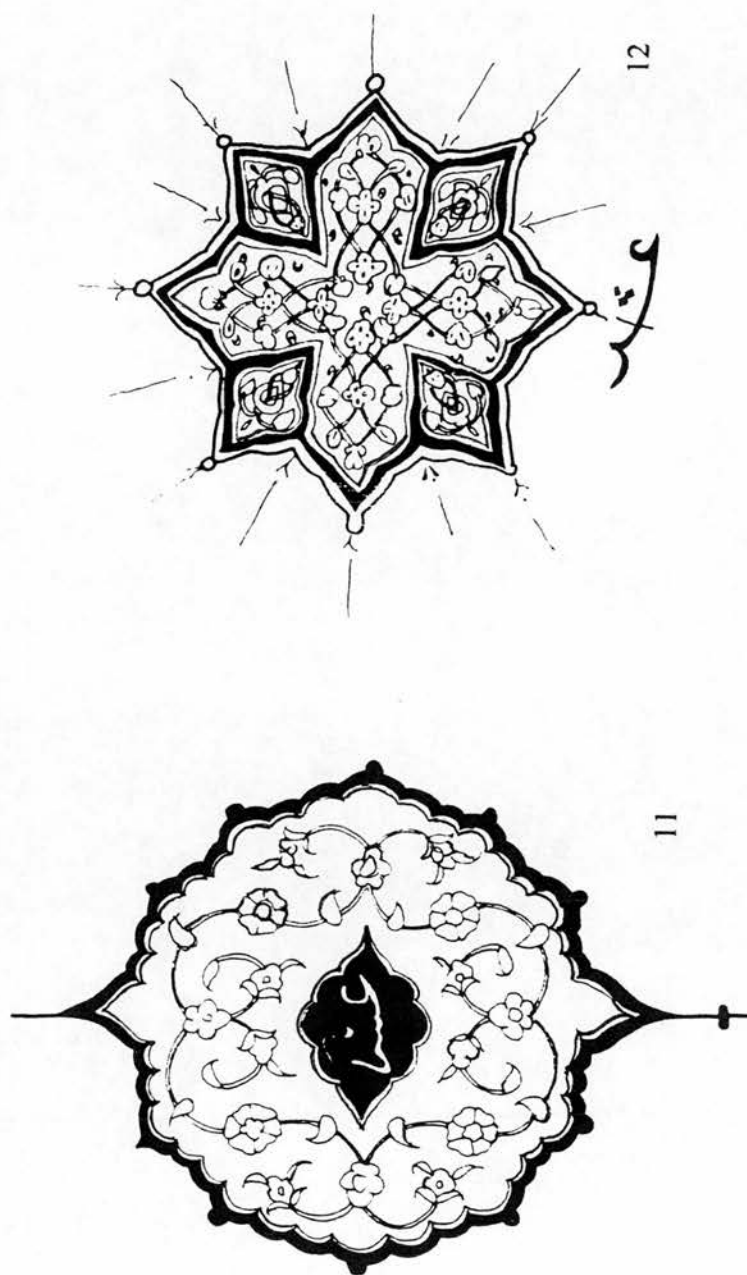
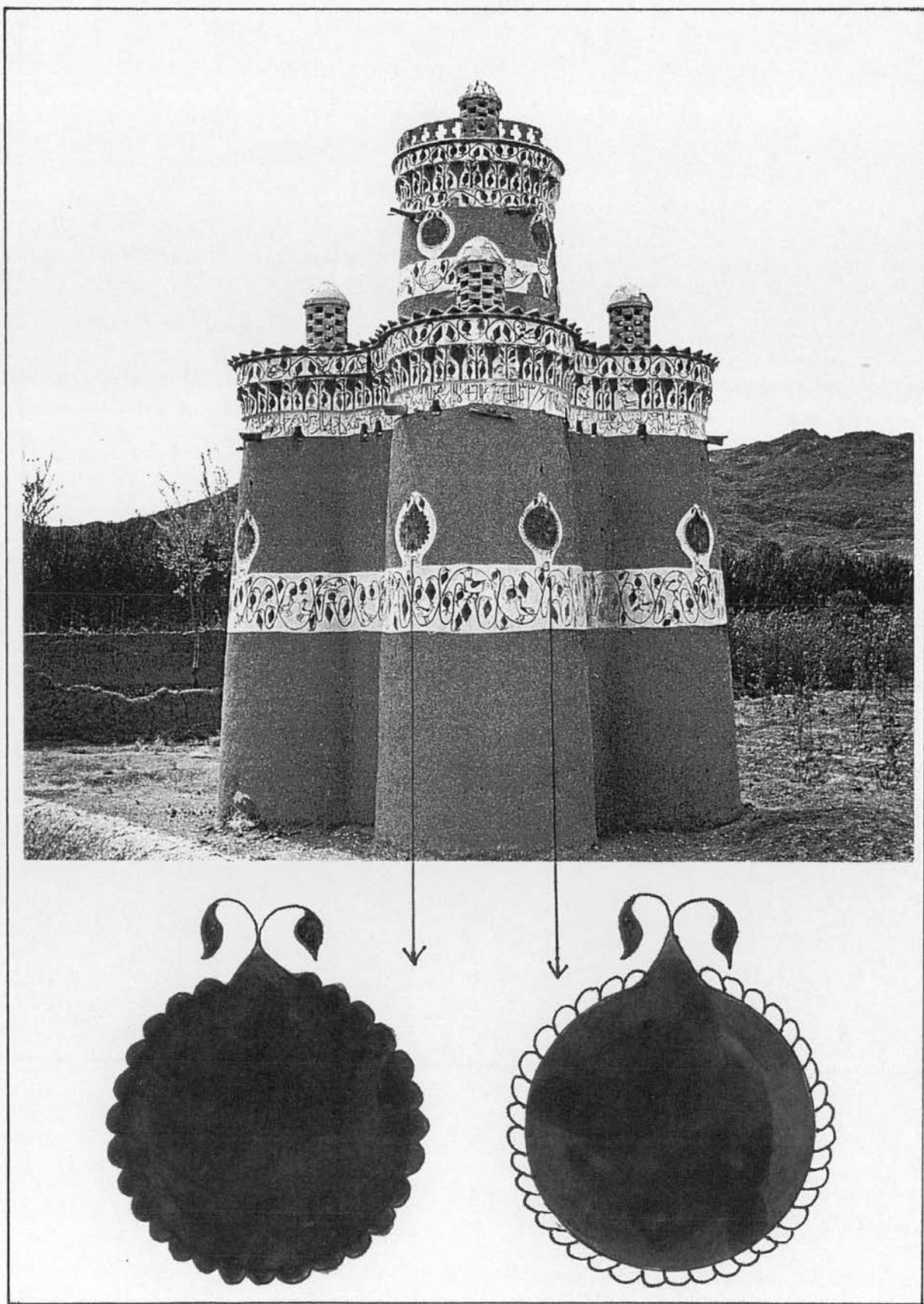


Fig. 9d. The *khamsah* and *‘asharah* designs (Safavid period).



Pl. 11. A pigeon tower at Linjân, near Pîr-i Bakrân.

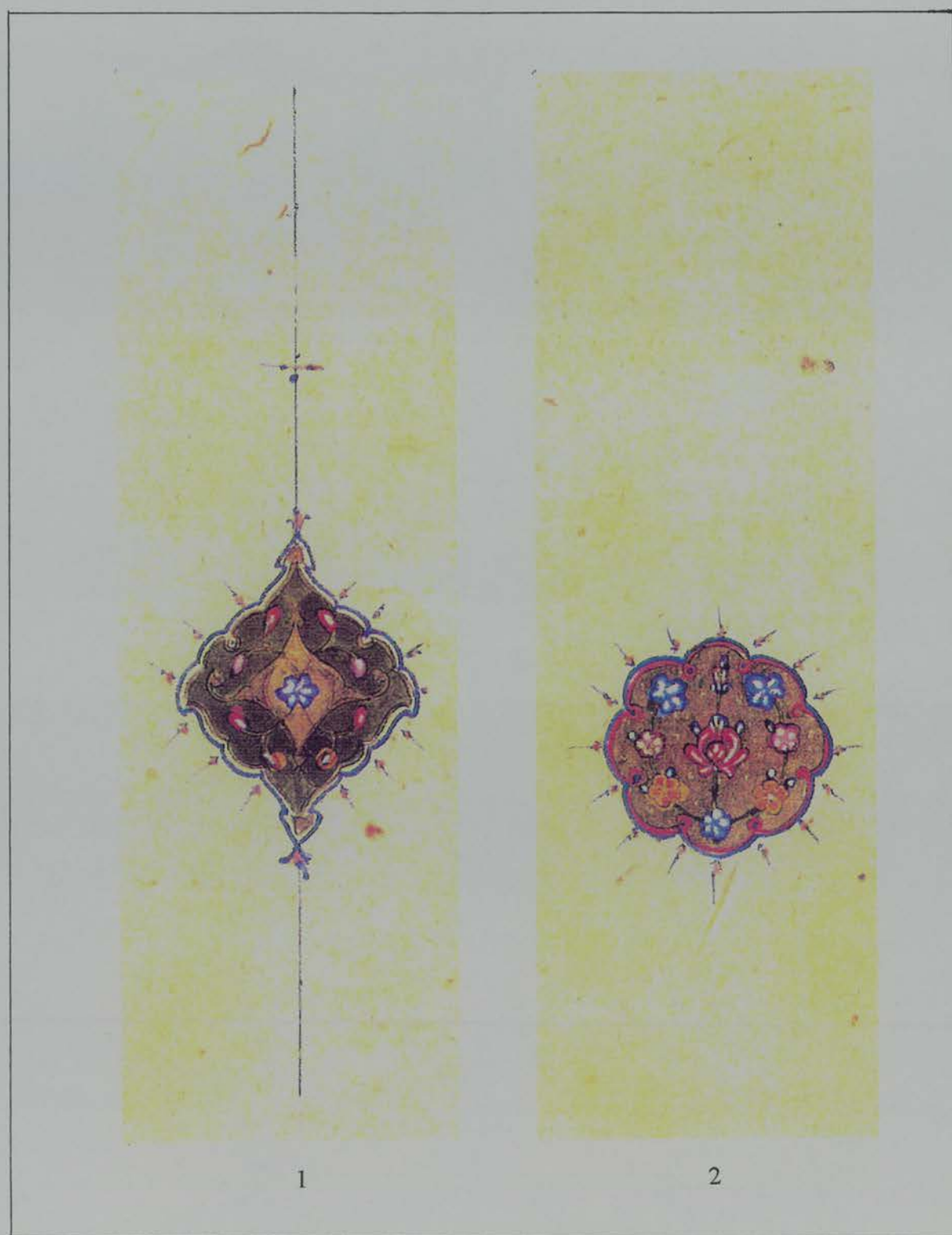


1



2

Pl. 12. 1 & 2. Alternately unwritten and written (*asharah*) symbols.  
Khalili, QUR441. Shîrâz. ca. 1525-1550 A.D.



Pl. 13. 1 & 2. Unwritten symbols of *khamsah* and *asharah*.  
Khalili, QUR441. Shîrâz. ca. 1525-1550 A.D.





1



2

Pl. 14. 1 & 2. Unwritten symbols of *khamseh* and *asharah*.  
Khalili, QUR231. Shîrâz or Qazwîn. 16th century A.D.



لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا ۖ وَالْأَرْضُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا  
 أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا ۖ وَالْجِبَالُ أَرْسَاهَا ۖ مَتَّاعًا  
 لَكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَكْرُومٌ ۖ فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَةُ الْكُبْرَى  
 يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَى ۖ وَبُرْزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَنْ يَرَى  
 فَمَا مَزْطَغَى ۖ وَاتَّخَذَ الْجُحُومُ الدُّنْيَا ۖ فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى  
 وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۖ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ  
 هِيَ الْمَأْوَى ۖ يُسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا ۖ قِيمَ أَنْتَ  
 مِنْ ذِكْرِهَا ۖ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْهَلَا ۖ أَلَمْ أَنْتَ مِنْذِرُ مَنْ  
 تُخَشِّئُهَا ۖ كَانَتْهُمْ يَوْمَ يُؤْتَوْنَ بِهَا الْبُرُجُ الْأَعْيَىٰ ۖ وَأُصْحَاهَا

سَيُوتَرَكُ عَذَابٌ كَثِيرٌ ۖ فَمِنْهُمْ

بَشَرٌ ۖ لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَالَمِ حَتَّىٰ كَانُوا فِيهَا يَذَبَرُونَ ۖ  
 عَسَىٰ وَتَوَقَّيْ ۖ أَنْ جَاءَ الْأَعْلَىٰ ۖ وَمَا يُدِيرُكَ لَعَلَّهِ يُزَكِّي  
 أَوْ يَذَكِّرُ فَتَفْعَلَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ ۖ أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَمْنَعَ ۖ فَانْتَ

لَدَىٰ

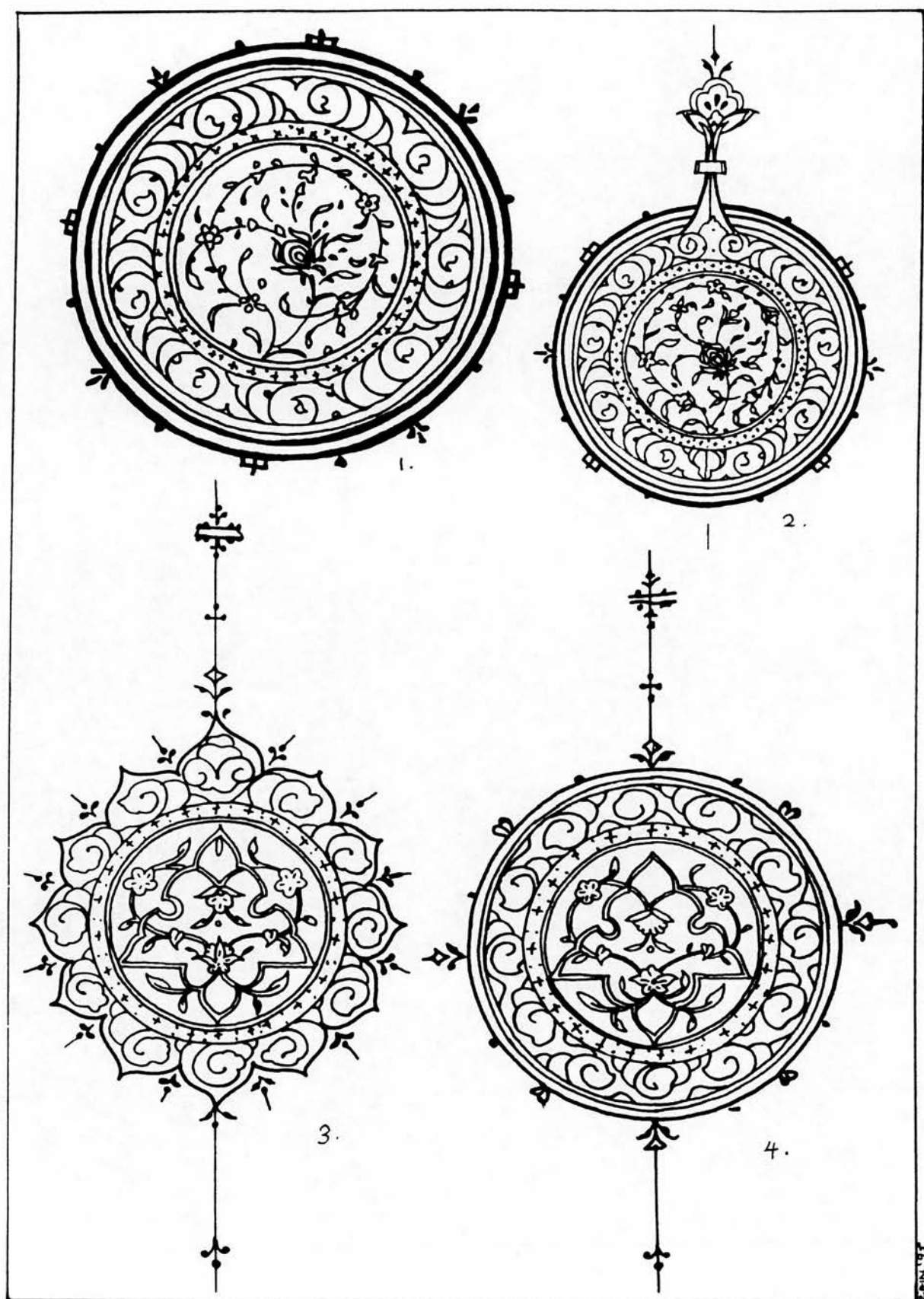


Fig. 9e. The *khamsah* and *'asharah* designs (Safavid period).



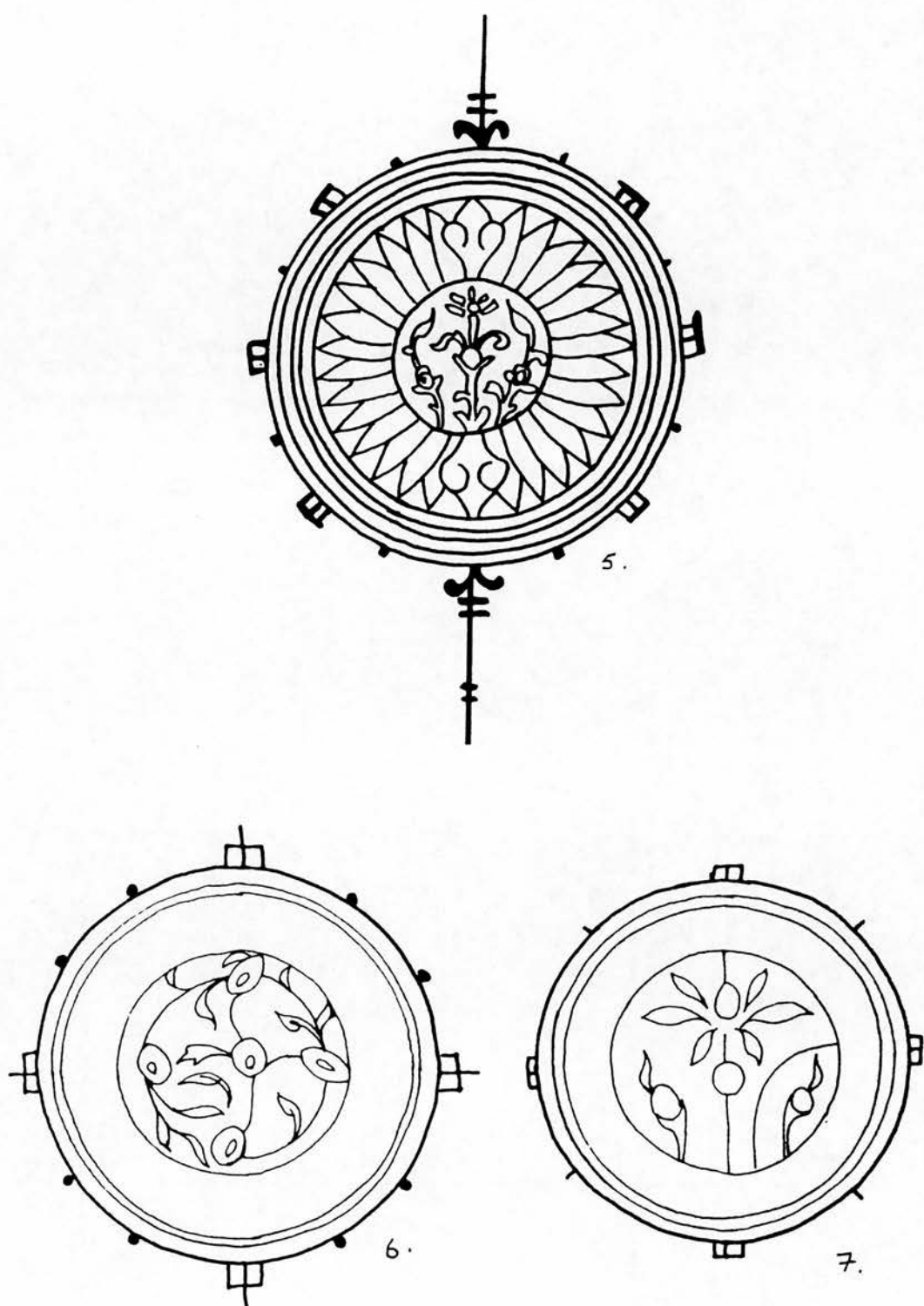


Fig. 9f. The *khamseh* and *asharah* designs (Safavid period).

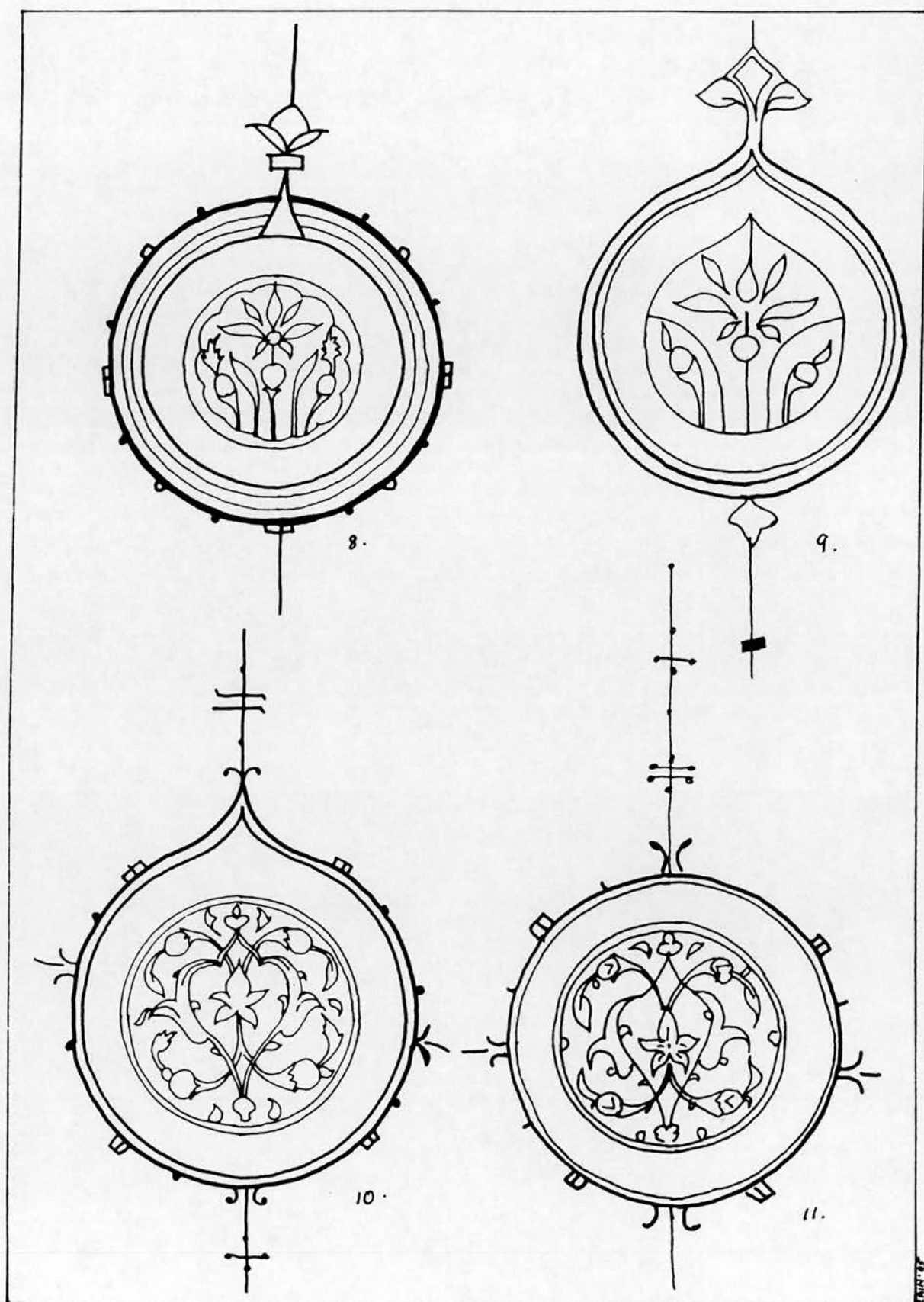


Fig. 9g. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Safavid period).

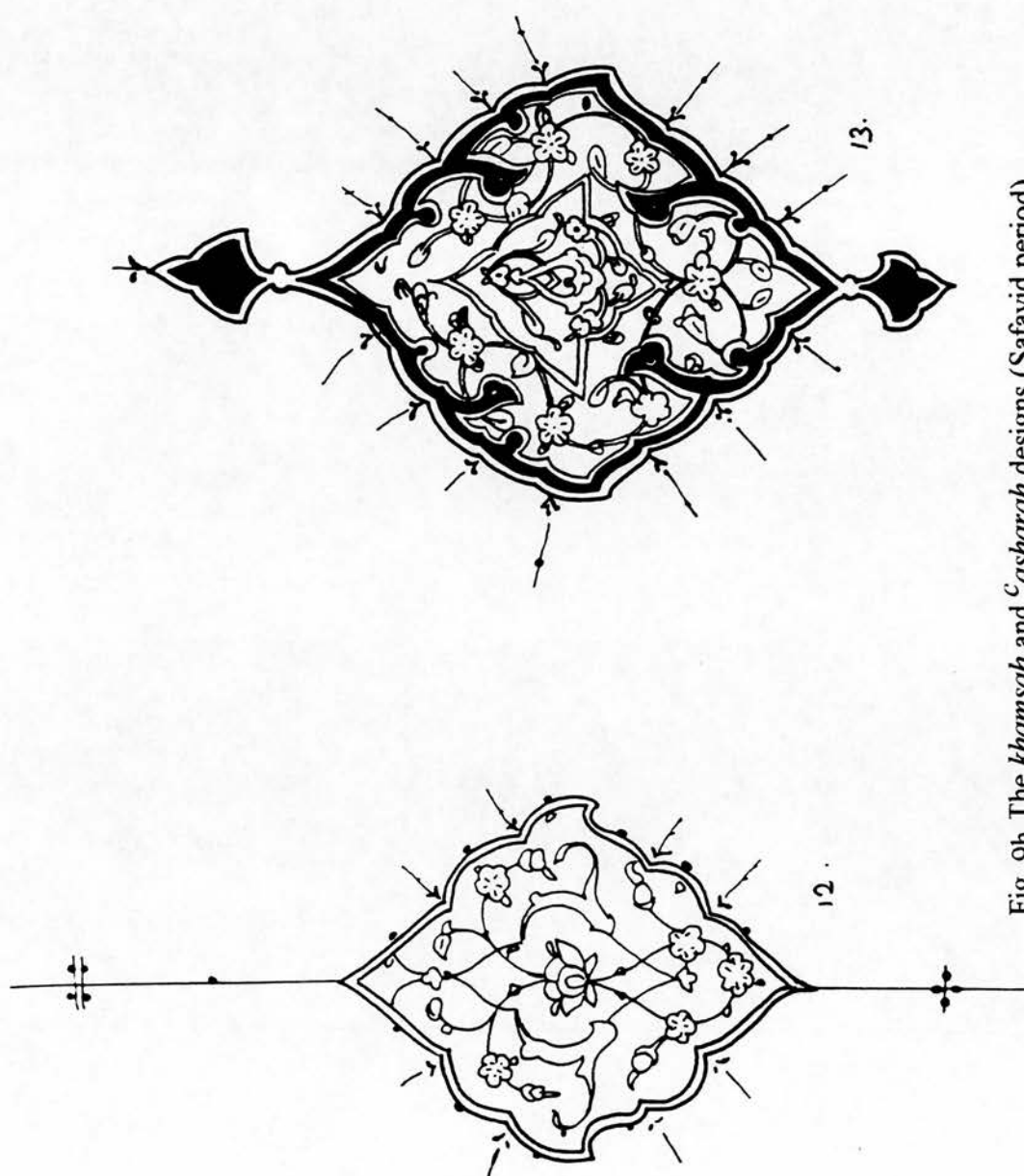


Fig. 9h. The *khamseh* and *'asharah* designs (Safavid period).

Fig. 9i.



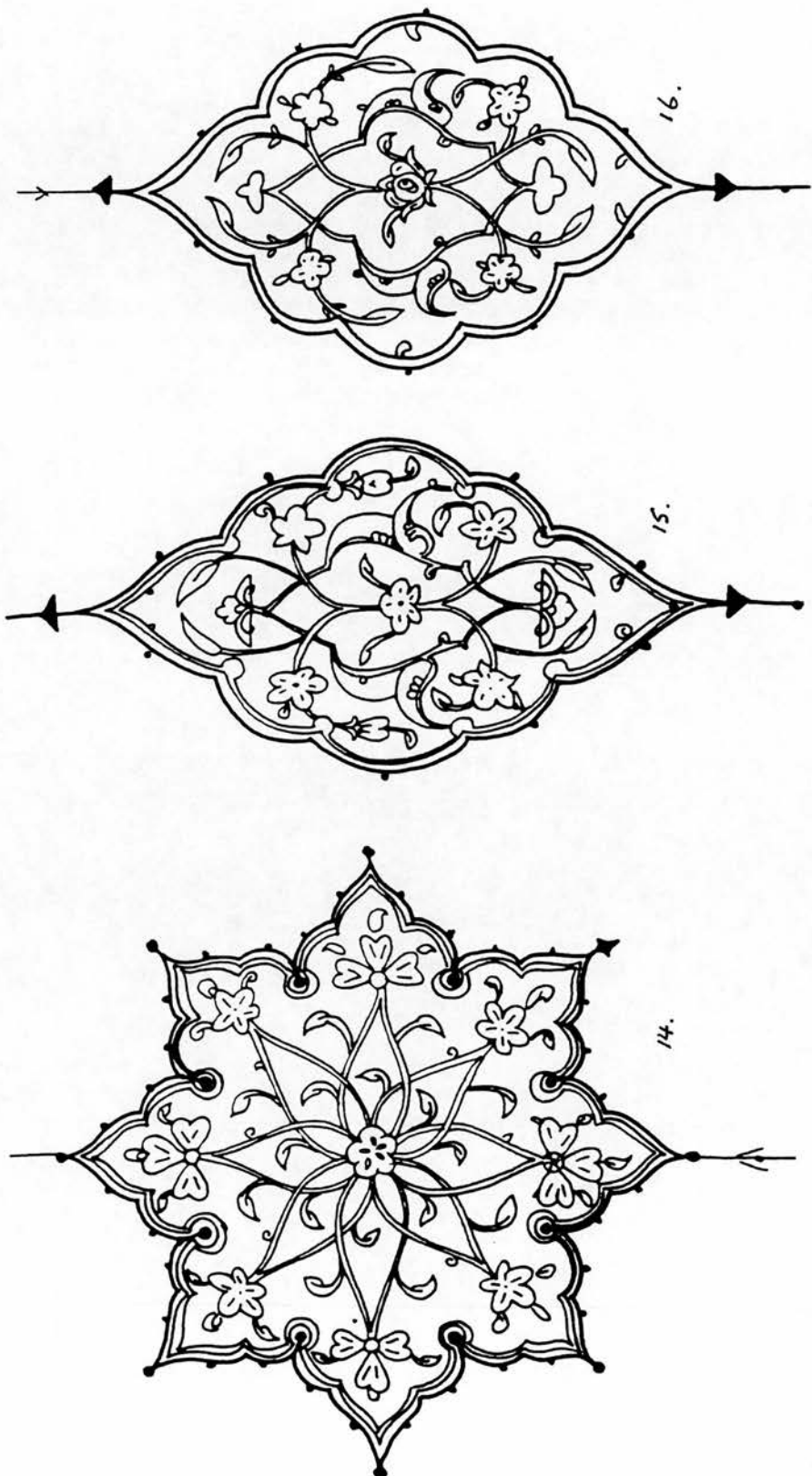


Fig. 9i. The *khamsah* and *ashraah* designs (Safavid period).

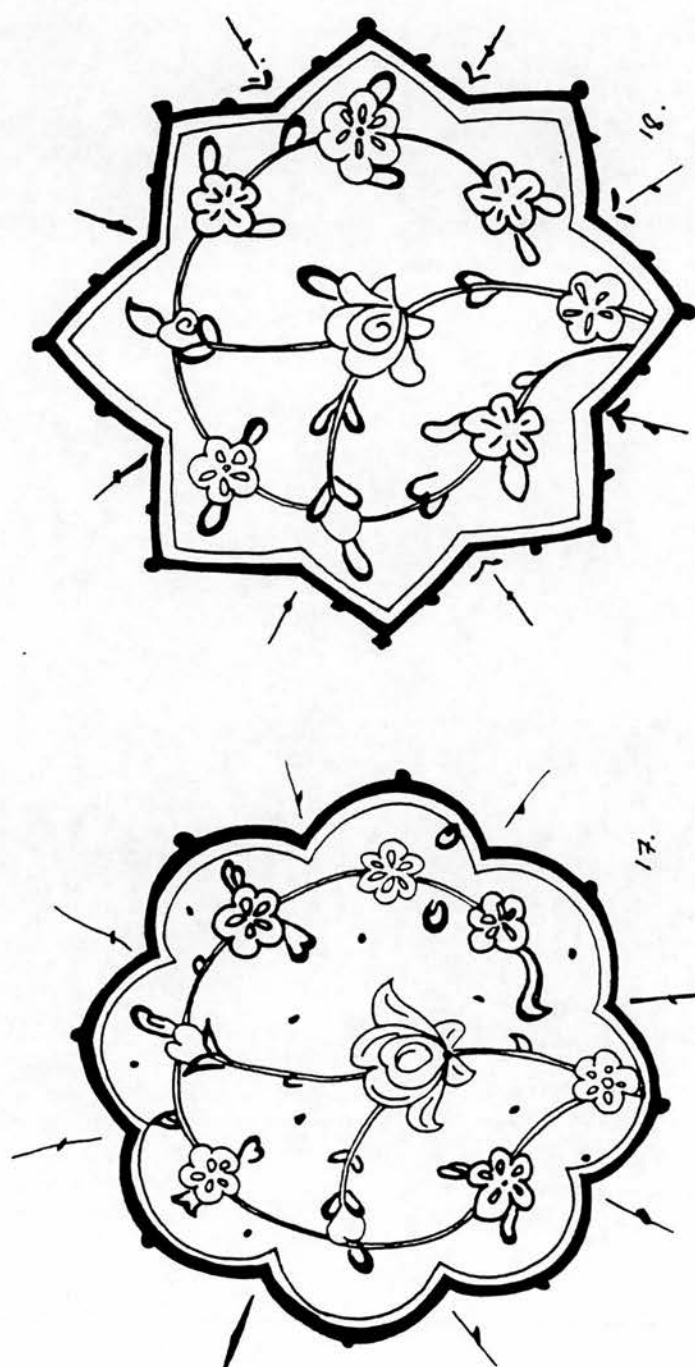


Fig. 9j. The *khamsah* and *asharah* designs (Safavid period).

## 7. The *sajdah* design

There are 14 prostration (*sajdah*) marks or designs in a typical Qur'ân. These marks in the Qur'ân indicate the point where prostration must be made.<sup>118</sup> They were normally placed at the end of the relevant *sajdah* verse.<sup>119</sup> According to Nöldeke and Ettinghausen, al-Bayḥaqî, a Persian religious authority who died in 458/1066, "forbade their use in the Qur'ân".<sup>120</sup> But the evidence shows that this marginal design had already existed as early as 391/1000-1 in the Qur'ân of ʿAlî ibn Hilâl, better known as Ibn al-Bawwâb.<sup>121</sup> According to Rice, Ibn al-Bawwâb had indirectly established the decorative scheme based on the structure or the division of the Qur'ân.<sup>122</sup> These decorated marginal marks continue to be used in present-day Qur'âns.

Usually, the *sajdah* marks were distinctly depicted and not to be confused with other marginal symbols in the Qur'ân. In most cases, the word *sajdah* was just written by the margin without any decoration. If it does have decoration, the design will be clearly indicated as different from any other design in the Qur'ân. This design is therefore special and deserves particular attention. The importance of this verse in the Qur'ân is physically shown by the person who recites this verse, who faces himself

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<sup>118</sup> Abdul-Fattah, Hassanin & Saleh, *Tajwîd*, 8.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>120</sup> See Ettinghausen, 'A Signed and Dated Seljuq Qur'ân', in *Islamic Art and Archaeology*, 516.

<sup>121</sup> Rice, "Ibn al-Bawwâb Manuscript", 3.

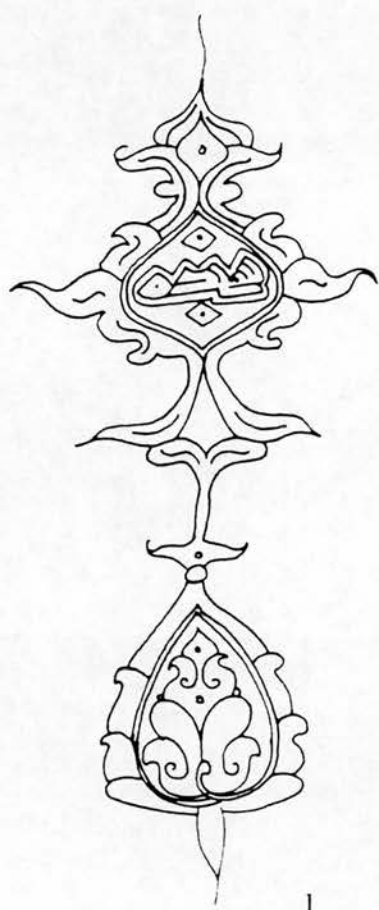
<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, See Khatibi & Sijelmassi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 142.

towards the *qiblah* and say a *du'â'*.<sup>123</sup> Thus another dimension of art is manifested through the Qur'ân, for this mark demands a physical response from the reciter.

The pre-Safavid *sajdah* designs are relatively simple (Fig. 10, no.1 and no.2). There is not much difference in terms of design between them and other marginal designs in the Qur'ân. But in the case of the 16th and 17th-century Safavid Qur'âns (Fig. 11, no. 1 and no. 2), the *sajdah* designs are more elaborate than those of earlier periods. They follow at least three different types of design: a single medallion type (Fig. 12), a double medallion type (Fig. 11, no. 2) and a three-medallion type (Fig. 11, no. 1). Their basic structures can be in the shape of a lotus flower, an escutcheon (vertical or horizontal) or a circle. The internal designs of all these medallions were intricately drawn with plant scrolls as well as cloud-scroll motifs. Some of these characteristics can be said to be typical of the Safavid style in the art of the Qur'ân.

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<sup>123</sup> Ettinghausen, *Islamic Art and Archeology*, 10.



1



2

Fig. 10. The *sajdah* design (Pre-Safavid).



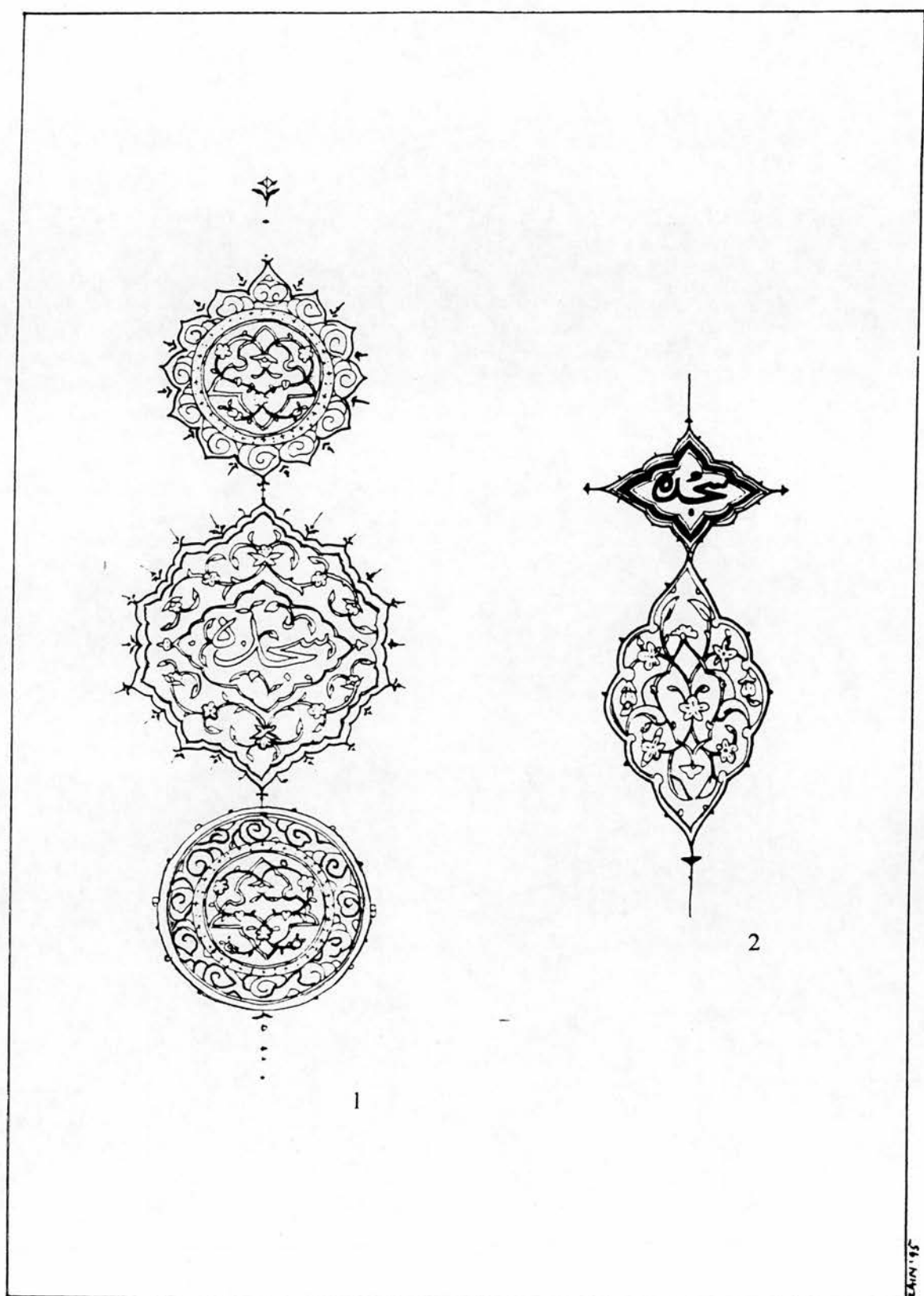


Fig. 11. The *sajdah* design (Safavid period).

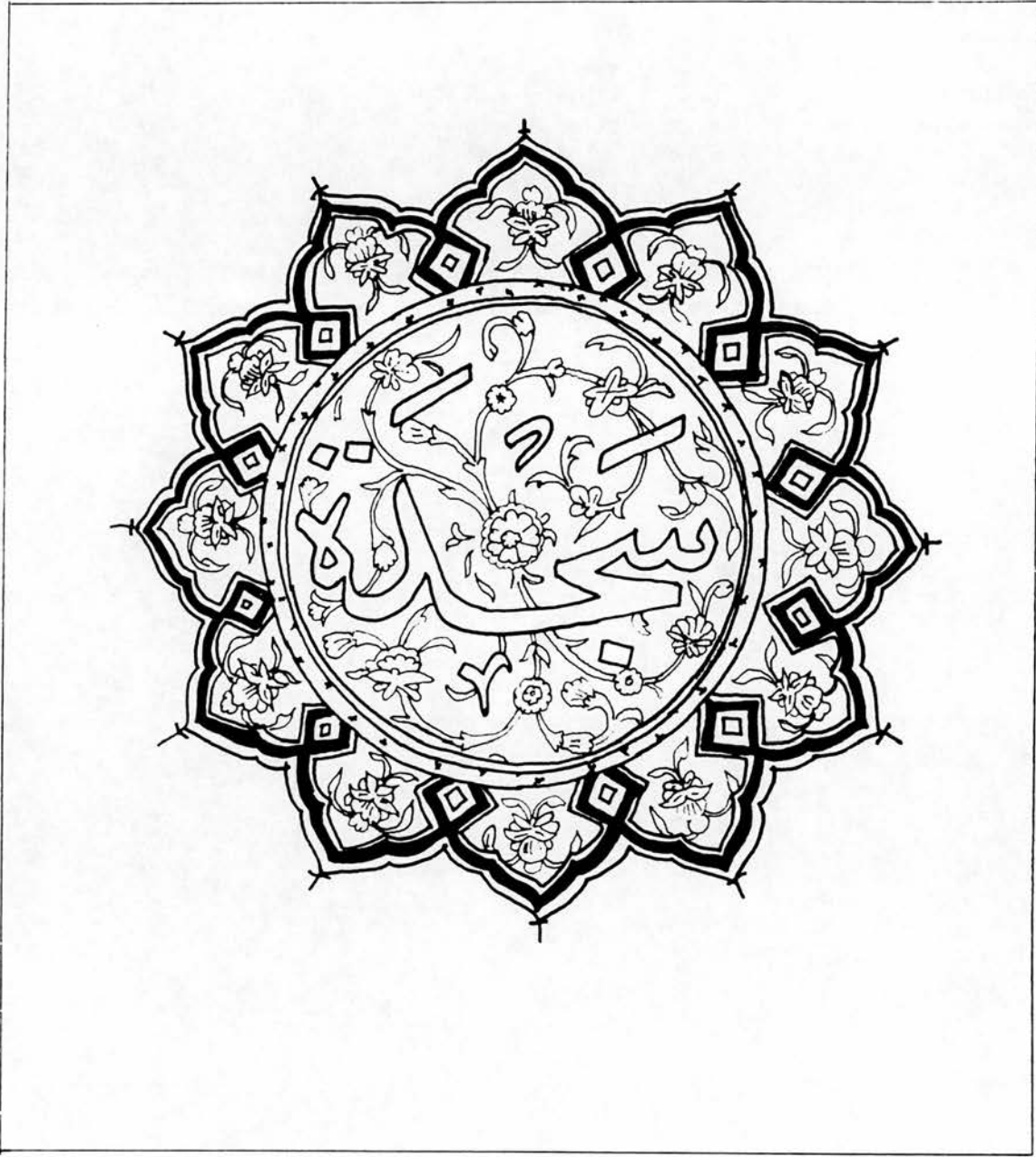


Fig. 12. The *sajdah* design (Safavid period).

## 8. Preliminary conclusion

To sum up, there are six types of marginal designs found in Safavid Qur'âns. These marginal designs are: the *manzil*, *juz'*, *hizb*, *rukû'*, *khamseh*, *asharah* and the *sajdah* marks. The *hizb* mark can be further divided into three types: the *rub'*, *nisf* and *thulth* marks. All these marginal marks serve a specific role in the division of the text in the Qur'ân, except for the *sajdah* marks. The *sajdah* mark is meant only for prostration. Normally, these marks were written in coloured inks such as red, blue and gold. The main purpose is to differentiate them from the text and to provide a means of highlighting reading instructions. In early Qur'âns, these symbols or marks can be found within the text; gradually, at a later age, they enter the margin.<sup>124</sup> If it is a framed text, these marks can be found written outside the frame.

From the 13th century onwards fuller decoration of the Qur'ân began to dominate. There seems to have been broader tolerance of decorative elements in the Qur'ân, as long as the purity of the text was protected.<sup>125</sup> This development provided greater opportunities for the artists to express their artistic skills and their piety. Marginal marks seem to be one aspect in the Qur'ân that attracted particular attention from the artists. Pre-Safavid developments marginal design<sup>126</sup> served as working models for artists in the following centuries. Elaborate decorative marginal marks gradually replaced the simple written word or single-letter designs. For example the word *juz'* is now placed at the centre of a full decorated medallion in the margin. On the whole, most of the designs prior to the Safavid period tend to be bold and powerful without the lightness and degree of refinement of Safavid work.

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<sup>124</sup> James, *MS*, 16.

<sup>125</sup> Rice, "*Ibn al-Bawwab Manuscript*", 29.

<sup>126</sup> *Op. cit.*, 19.

From ca. 1500 to ca. 1600 the so-called 'experimental age' began to bear fruit.<sup>127</sup> Marginal designs in this period reflect the maturity of the artists and their high level of artistic skill. At a glance, one can feel the relaxed atmosphere in the depiction of these marginal medallions.<sup>128</sup> Every aspect of designs were laid down within a total harmony. As Pope says, "precision, definiteness and controlled articulation have ever been the commanding ideals" of Persian artists.<sup>129</sup> Some striking visual vocabularies found in these marginal designs are cloud scroll-motif, plant-scroll motif and overall fine-line drawing technique.<sup>130</sup> Safavid designs reflect also a growing sophistication in artistic environment, patronage and art management as well as the business aspects of art in the 16th century.<sup>131</sup> Gradually, however, from the mid-17th century onwards, marginal designs began to deteriorate<sup>132</sup> and arrive at a stage of saturation. Some important characteristics of the Safavid style, such as the cloud-scroll motif, gradually disappeared.<sup>133</sup> The artists seem to fall back on the old models established in the pre-Safavid period, and the refinement in design, the elegance and the grace of the earlier century gradually disappeared.

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<sup>127</sup> The apogee of the Safavid civilization is in the reign of <sup>c</sup>Abbâs I (1587-1629). See R. Grousset, *The Civilizations of the East* (London, 1931), 371.

<sup>128</sup> Aminrazavi, "Aesthetic Experience in Islamic Art", 29-41.

<sup>129</sup> Pope, *Persian Art*, 217.

<sup>130</sup> *Op. cit.*, 384. Please refer to all the figures in this chapter. See also Dimand, *Handbook* (1947), Ersoy, *Türk* (1988) and James, *AT* (1992).

<sup>131</sup> James, *AT*, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Pope, *Persian Art*, 222. See also James, *AT*, 12.

<sup>133</sup> Ersoy, *Türk*, 94.

## **Chapter 6**

### **1. The significance of illuminated *âyat* in the Safavid Qur'ân**

#### **2. The illuminated *âyah***

##### **2.1 The first group of illuminated *âyat***

##### **2.2 The second group of illuminated *âyat***

##### **2.3. The third group of illuminated *âyat***

##### **2.4. The fourth group of illuminated *âyat***

#### **3. The illuminated word: Allâh**

### **4 Illumination in relation to the size of the Qur'ân**

### **5 Preliminary conclusion**



## 1. The significance of illuminated *âyat* in the Qur'ân

One of the most neglected areas in the study of illuminated Qur'âns is the illuminated *âyat* itself and the decorated pages that contain these *âyat*. What are the reasons behind all these illuminations and decorations in the Qur'ân? This chapter will focus on the *âyah* itself, as form of visual language used by the scribe/illuminator. These illuminated *âyat* have a direct link with the structure as exerting a direct influence on the format of the Qur'ân.

Basically, the Qur'ân can be divided into various sections. There are 114 *sûrahs* in the Qur'ân and within these *sûrahs* are 558 *rukû'*. A one-volume Qur'ân can also be divided into 7 *manâzil* or into 30 *juz'*. There are 2 *hizb* in a single *juz'*. Each *hizb* is again subdivided into *rub'* (1/4); *nişf* (1/2) and *thulth* (3/4). There are also *sajdah* marks in the Qur'ân. All these elements formed some of the basic structures that provide opportunities for the scribes/illuminators to decorate the Qur'ân. As to when and what to illuminate, this is a matter which rest entirely to the scribe/illuminator. If he is well funded, perhaps more areas in the Qur'ân will be illuminated or decorated. Thus, one can find many variations in the design of the Qur'âns produced by different scribes/illuminators. Some may have a full range of illumination while others may have less. Even the text itself can either be copied in a complete single-volume Qur'ân or, in parts combining to form a 30 part Qur'ân.

The tradition of having decoration or illumination in the Qur'ân had already been established as early as the second half of the 8th century A.D. Example of this can be seen in a single folio Qur'ân in the Khalili collection.<sup>1</sup> In this example, a simple

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<sup>1</sup> Khalili, KFQ50. See Déroche, *AT*, pl. 4.

geometric decorative band with yellow and green lozenges alternating on a green ground was painted to separate *Sûrah* 10 from *Sûrah* 11. Yellow lozenges in black outlines were given to mark the end of every single *âyah*. An *alif*, half in green and half in red, was also given to mark the end of every fifth *âyah*, whereas for every tenth *âyah* a red square was given. Such illumination points to an established working procedure or basic concept followed by most scribes/illuminators.

Examples of early Qur'âns (8th to 10th-century A.D.) studied by Déroche<sup>2</sup> in the Khalili collection highlight some interesting developments in illuminated Qur'âns. At the beginning, an empty space sufficed to differentiate between two *sûrahs*.<sup>3</sup> This probably suggests that the decoration of the Qur'ân is less important in such cases. At a later stage, coloured geometrical bands or illumination were added between the two *sûrahs*.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, the title of the *sûrah*, the number of *âyat* in that particular *sûrah*, the place of revelation and chronology were added. These facts can be found at the beginning of every *sûrah*, plus a vignette in the margin. All these informative elements such as title headings, number of *âyat*, place of revelation and chronology, though placed within the text block, were set apart from the actual text. A different type of script was often used, sometimes in a different colour from that of the main text, and it might be written within a decorated or illuminated frame, or outside that frame.<sup>5</sup> Within the text itself, every end of an *âyah* was marked and illuminated. Every five

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<sup>2</sup> Déroche has published comprehensive visual evidence, in chronological order, covering the various traditions or styles of the early period in Qur'ân illumination. See Déroche, *AT*.

<sup>3</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 23.

<sup>4</sup> Khalili, KFQ27. See Déroche, *AT*, pl. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Khalili, QUR48 and KFQ45. See Déroche, *AT*, pl. 10 and 17.

and ten *âyat* were also marked and illuminated.<sup>6</sup> By the 10th century onwards, various division of the text were indicated by name within the text block or outside the text block.<sup>7</sup> As for the frontispieces and finispieces, two folios of frontispieces and finispieces that marked the beginning and the end of the volume were already present in the 9th century Qur'âns.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in Qur'âns of the 11th century A.D. onwards, the illumination followed the basic principles which can be deduced from earlier Qur'ânic illumination. Of course there are some differences or variants in the style of illumination. For example, the 8th-10th-century A.D. Qur'âns had their five and ten *âyat* markers written both within and outside the text itself, whereas from the 11th century A.D. onwards, these markers were written or indicated in the margin, with or without decoration. Similarly, other markers such as *juz'*, *rukû'*, *hizb*, *rub'*, *nisf*, *thulth* and *sajdah*, were all indicated in the margin. *Sûrah* headings continued to be written in panels but with more elaborate designs and seem to demand more attention from the reader. An example of this can be seen in folios 200b-201a, in a single-volume Qur'ân datable 1000-1050 A.D. (from Iraq or Iran).<sup>9</sup>

Having said all that, one interesting feature found in illuminated Qur'âns is the illuminated *âyah* itself. It is interesting to note that such illuminated *âyat* begin from the status of the non-functional but gradually become functional. From being a mere

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<sup>6</sup> Khalili, KFQ50. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.4.

<sup>7</sup> Khalili, KFQ89. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.57.

<sup>8</sup> CBL Ms. 1407 (Arberry no. 6), and Khalili, QUR372. See James, *QB*, pl.4, and Déroche, *AT*, pl.24.

<sup>9</sup> Khalili, QUR284. See James, *MS*, pl.1.

decorative element they play a more specific role in the Qur'ân. The period between the 8th and the 10th century shows that illumination can be found in two areas of the Qur'ân. First, in the area that is outside the Qur'ânic scripts proper, such as in the *sûrah* heading and information related to it, as well as in the markers for divisions of *âyat*. A 9th-century Qur'ân in the British Library illustrates this category of non-text illuminated scripts.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, the illuminated text itself can be sub-divided into two types. The first type is the gold text with black outline. It can be seen in a 9th-century Qur'ân in Istanbul, in the Nurosmaniye Mosque Library.<sup>11</sup> The second type consists of entirely gold text. Examples can be seen in the famous Blue Qur'ân, perhaps of the 9th century, of which leaves exist in the Khalili collection and the Chester Beatty Library.<sup>12</sup> Both types suggest wealthy patronage. These examples do not suggest any specific meaning, but they do suggest an interest in decoration and the ability to pay for high-quality work in book-making.

From the 12th century A.D. onwards, these techniques of illuminated *âyat* had undergone further experimentation. Scripts in gold were now written alternately with black scripts.<sup>13</sup> There is a tendency towards pattern-making in the layout design.<sup>14</sup> In other cases, the black scripts were written with gold outlines. This type of Qur'ân can be seen in the Topkapi Saray Library, copied by Muḥammad ibn Aybak, dated

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<sup>10</sup> London, British Library, Or. 1397. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.2.

<sup>11</sup> Istanbul, Nurosmaniye Mosque Library, No. 27. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.3, and Déroche, *AT*, pl.17.

<sup>12</sup> Khalili, No. KFAQ53, and CBL MS. 1405 (Arberry No.4). See Déroche, *AT*, pl.42, and James, *QB*, pl.9.

<sup>13</sup> Khalili. No. 186. See James, *MS*, pl.4.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 8, page 423.

707/1307 in Baghdad.<sup>15</sup> All these techniques continue to be used until the Safavid period. Safavid Qur'âns, while continuing earlier models, went a step further in their illuminated *âyat* in the Qur'âns. These innovations will now be discussed in detail.

## **2. The illuminated *âyah***

Most Safavid Qur'âns have little illumination and only a few have much. One distinct feature found in the Safavid Qur'âns is the illuminated *âyah*. This feature can be analysed and appreciated from two angles: as a meaningful visual indicator and as a continuity in the Qur'ânic tradition. These illuminated *âyat* can be categorised under different groups of illumination. Five illuminated Safavid Qur'âns were taken as case studies (see Table 1) to highlight these features.

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<sup>15</sup> Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, E.H.245. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.46.



**The illuminated *âyat* in the Qur'ân.**

Col. 1 Key:	Col. 2 Q1. <sup>16</sup>	Col. 3 Q2. <sup>17</sup>	Col. 4 Q3. <sup>18</sup>	Col. 5 Q4. <sup>19</sup>	Col. 6 Q5. <sup>20</sup>	Col. 7 Q6. <sup>21</sup>
	Qur'ân 1	Qur'ân 2	Qur'ân 3	Qur'ân 4	Qur'ân 5	Qur'ân 6
Date		1554 AD	16th C.	16th C.	E. 17th C.	1673
No./Sûrah	No. of Juz':			Âyat		
<i>âyah in sûrah</i>						
1/Fâtihah	1:1	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7	1-7
2/Baqarah		1-4	1-13	1-4	1-21	1-17
				29-30		
	2:142	142-144	141-148	142-143	142	140-145
	3:253	253-256	249-255	253-254	253	249-254
3/Imran	4:92	92-99	84-96	92-97	92	91-100
4/Nisâ'	5:24	24-26	23-27	24-25	24	21-24
	6:148	148-154	144-153	148-150	148	142-151
5/Mâ'idah	7:83	86-92	80-91	80-83	83	85-92
6/An âm		1-14	0	0	0	0
	8:111	111-118	105-116	111-118	111	102-112
7/A'râf		0	0	0	0	1-13
	9:88	88-95	85-94	88	88	87-95
8/Anfâl	10:41	41-45	0	41	41	37-48
9/Taubah	11:94	94-99	93-102	94	94	91-98
10/Yûnus		0	0	0	0	0
11/Hûd	12:06	6-12	1-8	6	6	1-8
12/Yûsuf	13:53	53-63	44-54	53	53	47-56
13/Ra'd		0	0	0	0	0
14/Ibrâhîm		0	43-52	0	0	45-52
15/Hijr	14:02	1-14	1-3	2	2	1-6
16/Nahl		0	123-128	0	0	120-128
17/B. Isrâ-îl	15:01	1-7	1-4	1	1	1
18/Kahf		1-16	0	0	0	17-22

<sup>16</sup> This is the standard division of *juz'* based on S. A. Basmeih, *Tafsîr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian Al-Qur'ân (30 Juz')* (Kuala Lumpur, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> CBL MS.1540 (Arberry no. 153).

<sup>18</sup> CBL MS.1542 (Arberry no. 161).

<sup>19</sup> CBL MS.1547 (Arberry no. 163).

<sup>20</sup> CBL MS.1550 (Arberry no. 174).

<sup>21</sup> CBL MS 1554 (Arberry no. 172).

	16:75	75-82	60-79	75	75	61-76
19/Maryam		1-19	0	1-9	0	0
20/Tâ Hâ		1-32	129-135	0	0	0
21/Anbiyâ'	17:01	1-10	1-15	1	1	1-4
22/Hajj		0	77	0	0	0
23/Mû'minûn	18:01	1-14	1-17	1	1	1-12
24/Nûr		0	0	0	0	0
25/Furqân	19:21	18-25	11-27	21	21	10-20
26/Shu'arâ'		0	0	0	0	0
27/Naml	20:60	56-64	52-65	60	60	36-61
28/Qasas		0	0	0	0	61-69
29/Ânkabût	21:45	46-51	34-46	45	45	40-50
30/Rûm		0	0	0	0	0
31/Luqmân		0	0	0	0	0
32/Sajdah		1-13	0	0	0	0
33/Ahzâb	22:31	31-35.	29-37	31	31	23-31
		"Allah" in gold				
		only in 31-35.				
34/Sabâ'		0	0	0	0	0
35/Fâtîr		0	0	0	0	0
36/Yâsin	23:22	28-37	15-37	22	22	7-23
37/Sâffât		0	0	0	0	151-182
38/Sâd		0	0	0	0	1-2
39/Zumar	24:32	32-41	24-38	32	32	25-38
40/Mû'mîn		0	0	0	0	0
41/Hâ-Mîm	25:47	47-54	43-54	47	47	0
42/Shûrâ		0	0	0	0	0
43/Zukhruf		0	0	0	0	0
44/Dukhân		0	0	0	0	0
45/Jâthiyah		33-37	27-37	0	0	27-37
46/Aḥqâf	26:1	1-4	1-2	1	1-2	1-2
47/Muḥammad		0	0	0	0	0
48/Fatḥ		1-10	0	0	0	0
49/Hujurât		0	0	0	0	0
50/Qâf		0	0	0	0	0
51/Dhâriyât	27:31	31-47	23-47	31	31-32	2-34
52/Tûr		0	0	0	0	0
53/Najm		0	0	0	0	0
54/Qamar		0	0	0	0	0
55/Rahmân		0	0	0	0	0
56/Wâqî'ah		0	0	0	0	0
57/Hadîd		0	23-29	0	0	27-29
58/Mujâdala	28:1	1-6	0	1	1	1-6
59/Hashr		0	0	0	0	0
60/Mumtahana		0	0	0	0	0
61/Saff		0	0	0	0	0

62/Jumu'ah		0	0	0	0	0
63/Munâfiqûn		0	0	0	0	0
64/Taghâbun		0	0	0	0	0
65/Talâq		0	0	0	0	0
66/Tahrim		0	7-12	0	0	5-12
67/Mulk	29:1	1-9	1	1	1	1
68/Qalam		0	0	0	0	0
69/Hâqqah		0	0	0	0	0
70/Ma'ârij		0	0	0	0	0
71/Nûh		0	0	0	0	0
72/Jinn		0	0	0	0	0
73/Muzzammil		0	0	0	0	0
74/Muddaththir		0	0	0	0	0
75/Qiyâmah		0	0	0	0	0
76/Dahr		0	0	0	0	0
77/Mursalât		0	0	0	0	0
78/Nabâ'	30:1	1-25	1-38	1	1	1-40
79/Nâz i ât		0	0	0	0	0
80/'Abasa		0	0	0	0	0
81/Takwîr		0	0	0	0	0
82/Infitâr		0	0	0	0	0
83/Tatfîf		0	0	0	0	0
84/Inshiqâq		0	0	0	0	0
85/Burûj		0	0	0	0	0
86/Târiq		0	0	0	0	0
87/A' lâ		0	0	0	0	0
88/Ghâshiyah		0	0	0	0	0
89/Fajr		0	0	0	0	0
90/Balad		0	0	0	0	0
91/Shams		0	0	0	0	0
92/Lail		0	0	0	0	0
93/Dhuhâ		0	0	0	0	0
94/Inshirâh		0	0	0	0	0
95/Tîn		0	0	0	0	0
96/'Alaq		0	0	0	0	0
97/Qadr		0	0	0	0	0
98/Baiyinah		0	0	0	0	0
99/Zilzâl		0	0	0	0	0
100/ Âdiyât		0	0	0	0	0
101/Al-Qâri'ah		0	0	0	0	0
102/Takâthur		0	0	0	0	0
103/'Asr		0	0	0	0	0
104/Humazah		0	0	0	0	0
105/Fîl		0	0	0	0	0

106/Quraish		0	0	0	0	0
107/Mâ'ûn		0	0	0	0	0
108/Kauthar		0	0	0	0	0
109/Kâfirûn		0	0	0	0	0
110/Naşr		1-3	0	0	0	0
111/Lahab		1-5	0	0	0	0
112/Ikhlâs		1-4	0	0	0	0
113/Falaq		1-5	0	1-5	0	0
114/Nâs		1-6	1-6	1-6	0	0

Table 1.

## 2.1. The first group of illuminated âyât

The first group of illuminated *âyât* commonly found in the Safavid Qur'âns are confined to three main area of the text: the front, the middle, and the end of the Qur'ân. These three main illuminated areas are: i). *Sûrah* 1 and part of *Sûrah* 2. ii). *Sûrah* 18. iii). *Sûrah* 112, *Sûrah* 113 and *Sûrah* 114.

i). The first area comprises *Sûrah* 1:1-7 which was revealed in Mecca, and some *âyât* at the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. The illuminated *âyât* from *Sûrah* 2 vary from one Qur'ân to the other. It can be as little as 4 *âyât* to as many as 21 *âyât* (see Table 1). This *sûrah* was revealed in Madînah and contains 286 *âyât*. In terms of design, this first area is the most beautiful part in the whole design of such Safavid Qur'âns. The illuminated decoration seems to reflect much care on the part of the scribe/illuminator.

There are three methods of illumination used for *Sûrah* 1 and for part of *Sûrah* 2. The first method is when the first page is dedicated only to *Sûrah* 1 and the second page only to the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. An example of this can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Maqşûd <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Sharîf al-Tabrîzî al-Maftûlband, dated 962/1554 in Tabrîz

(hereafter Q2). All the seven *âyât* in *Sûrah* 1 were illuminated in folio 2a, while the illumination in *Sûrah* 2 comprises only *âyah* 1 to *âyah* 4 in folio 2b. The second method is a double-page spread of illumination solely dedicated to *Sûrah* 1, with the following double-page spread reserved for the opening *âyât* of *Sûrah* 2. This method can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Collection (hereafter Q3).<sup>22</sup> *Sûrah* 1:1-7 are illuminated in folios 3a and 3b. The following illuminated folios, 4a and 4b, consist of *Sûrah* 2:1-13. Sometimes another double-page spread of illuminated folios was also given to *Sûrah* 2 and extended to *âyah* 21. This is shown in the early 17th-century Qur'ân copied by Shagird in the Chester Beatty collection (hereafter Q5).<sup>23</sup> The third method is one double-page spread which contains both *Sûrah* 1 and some *âyât* of *Sûrah* 2 on the first page. The following page is then the continuation of *Sûrah* 2. An unsigned Qur'ân dated 1084/1673 from Isfâhân (hereafter Q6)<sup>24</sup> uses this method. Folio 1b consists solely of *Sûrah* 1 while folios 2a, 2b and 3a are illuminated with *Sûrah* 2:1-17. The number of *âyât* illuminated in *Sûrah* 2 probably depended on the preference of the scribe/illuminator, on the money available, and how closely the text was written.

To Muslims, *Sûrah* 1 is the most popular *sûrah* in the Qur'ân.<sup>25</sup> This is because of its position, by virtue of which it was known as the *Fâtihah al-Kitâb* (The opening of the Divine Writ), *Umm al-Kitâb* (The Mother (lit. — or Essence of the Divine Writ), *Sûrah al-Hamd* (The *Sûrah* of Praise) and *Asâs al-Qur'ân* (The Foundation of

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<sup>22</sup> CBL MS. 1542 (Arberry no. 161).

<sup>23</sup> CBL MS. 1550 (Arberry no. 174).

<sup>24</sup> CBL MS. 1554 (Arberry no. 172).

<sup>25</sup> See Dr. Zaid Abdulmohsin al-Hussain's "Foreword", in *QM* by James, 7.



the Qur'ân).<sup>26</sup> It is also equivalent to an introduction or foreword.<sup>27</sup> A *hadîth* narrated by Abû Sa'îd al-Mu'allâ states that this *sûrah* is the best *sûrah* in the Qur'ân.<sup>28</sup> It is a *sûrah* recited in every individual or congregational prayer<sup>29</sup> and must be recited seventeen times daily.<sup>30</sup> *Sûrah* 1 is also recited in most social ceremonies. It can also be used as a prayer to cure diseases or in various situations of hardship.<sup>31</sup> This celebrated *sûrah*, even when so fully covered with ornament that the writing is barely legible, is tolerated among Muslims because they know this *sûrah* by heart. Richard Ettinghausen described this as the "non-verbal message"<sup>32</sup> which is fully understood by the audience.

On the other hand, *Sûrah* 2, which is often on the *verso* of the first page, is usually subject to what was painted on the *recto* (*Sûrah* 1). The illumination of *Sûrah* 2 is intended to form a pair with that of *Sûrah* 1. The concept of pairing is as stated in the Qur'ân *Sûrah* 51:49: "And all things We have created by pairs, that haply ye may reflect".<sup>33</sup> Perhaps, this principle is internally applied to the decoration of the Qur'ân.

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<sup>26</sup> M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ân* (London, 1980), 1.

<sup>27</sup> S. A. Mawdûdî, *Tafhîm al-Qur'ân: Towards Understanding the Qur'ân*, tr. & ed. by Z. I. Ansari Vol.1 (United Kingdom, 1988), 33.

<sup>28</sup> M. M. Khân, *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*, Vol. VI (Ankara, 1976), 490. See J. Robson, *Mishkat Al-Maṣābiḥ*, (Lahore, 1972), 448.

<sup>29</sup> A. K. Chippa, *Beauty and Wisdom of The Holy Qur'ân* (New Delhi, 1990), 34.

<sup>30</sup> The recitation of *Sûrah* 1 (*al-Fâtîhah*) occurs during the five daily prayers of every Muslim.

<sup>31</sup> B. L. Yusuf, "Evolution and Development of *Tafsîr*", *The Islamic Quarterly* 38/1 (1994), 43.

<sup>32</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Decorative Arts and Painting: Their Character and Scope" in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. J. Schacht with C. E. Bosworth (Oxford, 1974), 280.

<sup>33</sup> M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ân* (London, 1930), 374.

If *Sûrah* 1 is man's prayer to God, then all the following text, from *Sûrah* 2 to *Sûrah* 114, is God's response to his prayer.<sup>34</sup> Since it is the beginning of God's answer to man's prayer, it is apt that *Sûrah* 2 is also illuminated. Moreover, as reported by Abû Umâmah, this *sûrah* is regarded as "the shining one" in the Qur'ân.<sup>35</sup>

ii). The second group of illuminated *âyât* can be found at the centre<sup>36</sup> of the Qur'ân. It is recorded by al-Suyûtî in *al-Itqân*, that there are several centres in the Qur'ân by different considerations. There are centres by letters, words, verses and *sûrahs*. For clarification, what this means is that, all the letters, words, verses and *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân is counted and divided by two to find the middle point. Different scribes may use different method to indicate the centre for their Qur'ân. If a letter method was used, therefore the letter *mîn* in the word *mukrân* in *Sûrah* 18:74 became the end letter of the first half the Qur'ân. The letter *kaf* in word *mukrân* is the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân. However, this is not the only opinion. The other opinion states that, the letter *mîn* in the word *mukrân* is the centre. At the same time, in another opinion, the letter *fâ'* in the word *wa-l-yatalattaf*, is as the centre letter. If the centre is considered by means of words, the word *wal-julûd* in *Sûrah* 22:20 (*al-Hajj*) is the end word for the first half of the text and the word *wa la hum ma qâ mi<sup>c</sup>u* in *Sûrah* 22:21 is the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân. If it is by means of verse, the verse which ends with *ya'fikûn* in *Sûrah* 26:45 (*al-Shu<sup>c</sup>arâ'*) is the end verse for the first half of the Qur'ân and the verse *fa<sup>c</sup>ulqiya al-saharatu* in *Sûrah* 26:46 is the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân. Finally, when

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<sup>34</sup> Mawdûdî, *TQ*, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Robson, *Mishkat*, pp. 448-449.

<sup>36</sup> See al-Suyûtî, Jalâl al-Dîn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Rahmân, *al-Itqân fî <sup>c</sup>ulûm al-Qur'ân*, ed. Muhammad Abû al-Fadl Ibrâhîm, Vol. 1 (Cairo, 1387/1967), 198.

considered, by means of the *sûrahs* itself, *Sûrah* 15 (*al-Ĥadîd*) is the end of the first half and *Sûrah* 16 (*al-Mujâdalah*) is the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân.

Table 1 shows that all the five selected Qur'âns have used the first method for their centres, but this method were not strictly followed. Illumination of *âyât* to mark the centre were given according to the personal choice of the scribe himself. Q2 has illumination in *âyât* 1-16 of *Sûrah* 18 and Q6 in *âyât* 17-22 of the same *sûrah*. The former (Q2) is quite close to the word *wa-l-yatalattaf* while the latter (Q6) has the word *wa-l-yatalattaf* in it. As mentioned in the earlier paragraph, the letter *fâ'* in the word *wa-l-yatalattaf* is the centre of the Qur'ân. On the other hand, Q2 has also illumination in *âyât* 75-82 of *Sûrah* 18 and this may suggest the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân as well as the beginning of *juz'* 16. *Juz'* 16 begins from *âyât* 75 onwards. Illuminated *âyât* 75 of *Sûrah* 18 can also be found in Q3, Q4, Q5 and Q6 (see Table 1). After the letter *mûn* in the word *mukrân* in *âyât* 74, the following *âyât* 75 of *Sûrah* 18 is to mark the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ân as stated earlier. As far as illumination is concern, *Sûrah al-Kahfi* (18), a name taken from *âyah* 9 in which the word *al-Kahfi* occurs, can be said as the centre marking for Qur'ân. According to James, it is "the beginning of the second half of the Qur'ânic text".<sup>37</sup> According to the tradition of Qur'ân reading in Malaysia,<sup>38</sup> the word *wa-l-yatalattaf* in *sûrah* 18:19 is accepted as the centre word of the Qur'ân. This definition of the centre is based on the division of the text itself by means of letters rather than words, *âyât* and *sûrahs*. Thus the visual marker for the centre was indicated by the illuminated *âyât* in *Sûrah* 18. The centre was thus defined for practical reasons. Since

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<sup>37</sup> James, *AT*, 114.

<sup>38</sup> Printed Qur'âns in Malaysia have *Sûrah* 18:19 highlighted in red simply to indicate to the reader that he has already recited half of the Qur'ân.

neither the pages nor the verses of the Qur'ân are individually numbered, this device helps to indicate to the reader that he is half-way through his recitation. These two halves can also be checked by the thickness of the Qur'ân.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, from another angle, symbolically this *sûrah* is also commonly understood among Muslims as the 'heart' of the Qur'ân. Muslims believe that the Qur'ân relates spiritually to the heart of man. The Prophet had his heart cleaned before receiving the revelation from God. It is narrated in a *hadîth* from Ibn ʿAbbâs that only through the heart, a purified heart, did the Holy Prophet see God.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps, indeed, there is a significant relationship between the layout or structural concept of the Qur'ân and the concept of the 'heart'. Baiḥaqî says in his *Kitâb al-Daʿawât al-Kabîr* that, according to the Prophet as reported by Abû Saʿîd, light will shine brightly for anyone who recites *Sûrah* 18 on Friday and it will stay bright until the next Friday.<sup>41</sup>

The last illuminated group of *âyât* in the Qur'ân comprises at least one *sûrah* but sometimes more. These illuminated *sûrahs* can be from *Sûrah* 110 to 114. This last body of illumination is used to balance the first group of illumination in the Qur'ân, that is *Sûrah* 1 and 2. Usually, a double-page spread of illumination was allocated for this last area (see Q2 in Table 1). In other cases, only a single page was illuminated and the following page would normally consist of prayers (*duʿa*) to be conducted after the recitation of the whole Qur'ân. If the first part acts as an

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<sup>39</sup> I have frequently experienced checking for the centre by merely dividing the Qur'ân into two halves. To my surprise, the centre is always *Sûrah* 18 — and illuminated.

<sup>40</sup> A. H. Siddiqî, *Sahih Muslim*. Vol. 1 (Lahore, 1976), 111.

<sup>41</sup> Robson, *Mishkat*, 459.

invitation to the word of God, with elaborate decoration and illumination symbolising its greatness, then similarly, following the same concept and meaning, the last part of the Qur'ân was appropriately given the same treatment. It has to end beautifully. This carefully planned layout was standard for illuminated Qur'âns in the Safavid period.

In terms of content, if the first area of illumination, *Sûrah* 1, begins with man's prayer to God seeking for guidance, and God gave His answers from *Sûrah* 2 onward, then the three last *sûrahs* give God's teaching to man to seek refuge and protection from Him. In the transmissions of Malîk, Muslim, al-Tirmidhî, Abû Dâwûd and al-Nasâ'î, it is reported by ʿUqbah ibn ʿÂmîr that *Sûrah* 113 and *Sûrah* 114 are considered special *âyat* in the Qur'ân,<sup>42</sup> and one should always recite them.<sup>43</sup> Thus these passages are usually recited in daily prayers. Thus, there seems to be a close connection between the aesthetic of book-making and the content of the text. Coincidentally, both the text and the physical layout enhance each other at the end of the Qur'ân.

## **2.2. The second group of illuminated *âyat***

The tradition of illuminated Qur'âns shows that the beginning of every *sûrah* must be indicated in some way. This can either be in the form of an illuminated panel which contains the *sûrah* heading, or in the form of an illuminated *âyah* at the

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<sup>42</sup> S. Qutb, *In the Shade of The Qur'ân*, tr. M. Adil Salahi & Ashur A. Shamis. Vol. 30 (London, 1979), 358.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



beginning of the *sûrah*. Sometimes both methods were used, as shown in the five illuminated Safavid Qur'âns discussed in this chapter. The concentration here is on illuminated *âyat*. Not all *sûrahs* have illuminated *âyat* at the beginning and only some were illuminated. Those that were not illuminated were given illuminated panels for their *sûrah* headings plus information related to each particular *sûrah*. This method serves to break the monotony of the design and to add variety to its illumination.

The indication of a new *sûrah* by means of a panel is standard in the five Qur'âns considered here. The only difference was in their illuminated *âyat* which marked the beginning of a *sûrah*. One may have more while another may have less. In Q2, out of the 114 *sûrahs*, there are 5 portions of illuminated *âyat* that mark the beginning of *sûrahs*. These are *Sûrah* 6:1-14, *Sûrah* 19:1-19; *Sûrah* 20:1-32, *Sûrah* 32:1-13 and *Sûrah* 48:1-10. On the other hand, Q4 has only one body of illuminated *âyat*, namely from *Sûrah* 19:1-9. Why only these portions of *âyat* were illuminated is not known. The facts simply suggest that different scribes/illuminators had different ways of indicating the beginning of their *sûrahs*. This lesser level of illumination may also reflect more modest patronage.

### **2.3. The third group of illuminated *âyat***

Primarily, illuminated *âyat* in the Qur'ân were carefully designed either to carry specific meaning or to serve reading purposes. Normally, the beginning of a new *juz'* will be indicated by adding the word *juz'* in the margin next to the first *âyah* of the *juz'*. At times, there can be both illuminated *âyat* and the word *juz'* by the margin. In other instances, only vegetal decoration in the form of a medallion was placed in

the margin next to the *âyah*.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes in a single Qur'ân one can find a combination of all these three methods.

Table 1 shows that there was a systematic pattern in the arrangement of the illuminated *âyât*. These illuminated *âyât* actually indicate the beginning of all 30 *juz* ' throughout the Qur'ân. The beginning of a specific *juz* ' is always marked by a specific *âyah* in the Qur'ân (see column 2 in Table 1).<sup>45</sup> For example, *Juz* ' 4 will only begin at *Sûrah* 3:92 and will finish in the following *sûrah*, 4:23. *Sûrah* 4:24 will then indicate the beginning of *Juz* ' 5. In the five illuminated Qur'âns under discussion (see Table 1), the actual beginning of the *juz* ' can be found somewhere within a *sûrah* and is marked by illuminated folios. The marking of a new *juz* ' by means of illumination can involve as little as 1 *âyah*, as indicated in column five in the Table, in *Sûrah* 46,<sup>46</sup> or as many as 8 *âyât* in *Sûrah* 6, also of the 16th-century Qur'ân identified as Q4.

On the other hand, sometimes the final *âyât* of a section were also illuminated. These closing *âyât* can be interpreted as marking the end of both *juz* ' and *sûrah*. For example *Sûrah* 45:33-37 can be the final *âyât* for *Juz* ' 25 in *Sûrah* 41, as well as the final *âyât* for *Sûrah* 45 (see Table 1). These are clearly shown in Q2, Q3 and Q6 but not in Q4 and Q5. This shows that the system of marking the end of a *juz* ' or a *sûrah* is not consistent throughout these five illuminated Qur'âns. There are only 6 sections of illuminated *âyât* throughout these Qur'âns. They are in *Sûrah* 14:43-52, *Sûrah* 16:120-128; *Sûrah* 37:151-182; *Sûrah* 45:27-37; *Sûrah* 57: 23-29 and *Sûrah* 66:5-12.

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<sup>44</sup> Discussion of vegetal decoration follows in Chapter 3.

<sup>45</sup> Basameih gives a clear division of 30 *juz* ' in *Tafsîr Pimpinan Ar-Rahman*. The whole country of Malaysia currently uses this edition of the Qur'ân.

<sup>46</sup> CBL MS.1542 (Arberry no.161).

This suggests that the extra illumination given to these *âyat* served merely decorative purposes and did not adhere to any specific rules or tradition. The illuminated portions were added simply to balance the illuminated areas in the composition. In between these illuminated *âyat* are panels for *sûrah* headings. Therefore, the *âyat* before and after this panel were illuminated.

#### 2.4. The fourth group of illuminated *âyat*

Other than the *sûrah* and *juz'* marks found in these five Qur'âns, there is also another group of illuminated *âyat* that demand attention. This group of *âyat* mark the beginning of a section in the Qur'ân. This section is also known as *rukû'*. There are 558 *rukû'* in one full-volume Qur'ân.<sup>47</sup> They are usually marked by the letter *ʿayn* in red or blue in the margin. In these five Safavid Qur'âns, *rukû'* marks are also present. There are two methods of indicating this *rukû'*. One is by means of the letter *ʿayn* in the margin, and the other is by illuminating the *âyah* where a new *rukû'* begins. *Âyah* 77 in *Sûrah* 22 of Q2 is actually the beginning of a sub-section of the tenth *rukû'*. *Sûrah* 22 has 10 sections or *rukû's* altogether (see Table 1, column 2). Another example is in Q4, where *Sûrah* 2:29-30 is an indicator for the beginning of *rukû'* 4. *Rukû'* 4 begins from *âyah* 30 onwards. Similarly in Q6, out of the 9 *rukû'* present in *Sûrah* 28, only *âyat* 61-69 — that is, *rukû'* 7 — were marked or illuminated. Therefore, in these five illuminated Qur'âns, only three Qur'âns used this scheme, plus the standard practice of marking the *rukû'* with the letter *ʿayn* by the margin. The other two illuminated Qur'âns do not have any illuminated *âyat* to mark the beginning of a *rukû'* except for the letter *ʿayn* by the margin.

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<sup>47</sup> Ali, "Qur'ân", 81.

### 3. The illuminated word

Finally, there are also illuminated words which do not function as markers for various divisions of the text. These illuminated words can be considered as ornament within the script, or perhaps as having a significant role in the text, to the scribe as well as to the reader. Truly to grasp the message of such ornament, one has to penetrate from the external appearance to the internal reality of its meaning.<sup>48</sup> It is the difference between intellectual understanding and the spirituality of the heart. According to Waddy, "the Qur'ân was meant to inspire"<sup>49</sup> as stated in *Sûrah* 47:24 and *Sûrah* 14:1.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, it is the "Book of Light, the Radiant Qur'ân"<sup>51</sup> and full of symbolism.<sup>52</sup> The purpose of the symbolism, the illumination, is to get to know God. "The Word for Islam was actually revealed and it assumed shape"<sup>53</sup> — as letters forming actual words. The Muslim believes that the presence of God is indicated by the image of the word;<sup>54</sup> And the Word is the foundation of Islamic art.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> C. Waddy, *The Muslim Mind* (London, 1976), 14.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, 1385 and 619.

<sup>51</sup> L. Hixon, *Heart of the Koran* (Illinois, 1988), 237.

<sup>52</sup> Lings, *Symbol*, 1. See E. C. Dodd & S. Khairallah, *The Image of the Word*, Vol. I (Beirut, 1981), 18.

<sup>53</sup> Dodd & Khairallah, *Image*, Vol. I, 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

To Muslims, the most striking message in the image of the Word is the word "Allâh" itself in the Qur'ân. "Allâh is the name of the essence, or the Absolute."<sup>56</sup> This word is unique, untranslatable and has no derivation.<sup>57</sup> "It connotes all the attributes of perfection and beauty in their infinitude, and denotes none but the one and unique God."<sup>58</sup> *Sûrah* 59:22-4 expatiates on this. The word "Allâh" is purposely marked, coloured and illuminated in many Qur'âns. This highlighted word probably suggests a multi-level meaning to both the scribe/illuminator as well as to the reader. From an artistic point of view, one can say that such an intention carries at least two levels of meaning.

On the first level, it is a powerful means of transmitting a spiritual and religious message to the Muslim. The highlighted (or illuminated) word "Allâh" seems to be raised, or to stand out, from the page of the Qur'ân. Indirectly, this illumination suggests the artist's desire to glorify God. This radiated Word could also be related to the concept of 'light' in Islam, as stated in *Sûrah* 24:35 (the "Light Verse"). The Sufis, inspired by this *âyah*, perceived light as having different levels. For them, the highest form of light is God Himself.<sup>59</sup> To the ordinary Muslim, it is generally understood that the artistic conception of 'light' is of the lowest form of 'light'. Thus the very best manifestation whereby an artist could convey the concept and meaning of divine 'light' is by means of highlighting in gold certain words in the Qur'ân. The gold colour (or sometimes red) which is used for the letters of "Allâh" is an excellent means of

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<sup>56</sup> Glassé, *CEI*, 35.

<sup>57</sup> Chippa, *Beauty*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> M. Khalifa, *The Sublime Qur'ân and Orientalism* (London, 1983), 111.

<sup>59</sup> I. R. Netton, *Allâh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (Surrey, 1994), 257.



achieving this end, thereby fulfilling the spiritual intention of the artist to glorify God.<sup>60</sup>

On the second level, when this word "Allâh" is repeatedly highlighted or illuminated in the Qur'ân, it suggests a different meaning to its audience. It still maintains its purpose as a reminder of Almighty God, but this time with greater emphasis on the Word itself.<sup>61</sup> The repeatedly highlighted word is like a flash light which shines and vibrates to give an after image to the mental vision, as well as in the heart and soul of the reader. Furthermore, the golden word "Allâh", surrounded as it is by other words in black, will be effectively registered as having a psychological effect. This repeatedly highlighted Word functioned as a kind of 'visual *dhikr*' in the mind and soul not only of the scribe/illuminator, but also of any Muslim who reads the Qur'ân.<sup>62</sup> It is a common practice and an act of virtue among Muslims to always remember God in the form of *dhikr*.<sup>63</sup> In the teaching of Islam, the greatness of remembering God (*dhikru'llâh*) is clearly established in the Qur'ân, in *Sûrah* 39:45. It is said that "the depth of one's prayer is realised in accordance with the depth of [one's] *dhikr*".<sup>64</sup> According to Ḥasan al-Basrî, there are two kinds of *dhikr*: 1) God's *dhikr* in the mind, and 2) to remember God at the time of the commission of an

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<sup>60</sup> A. Bahnassi, "The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art," *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture* 26/1-4 (1982), 86.

<sup>61</sup> See Qur'ân 16: 44 and Yusuf, "Evolution and Development of *Tafsîr*", pp.34-47.

<sup>62</sup> Bahnassi, "The Spiritual Philosophy of Arab Art," 82.

<sup>63</sup> Mawlana F. Karim, *Imam Ghazâlî's Ihyâ Ulûm-id-dîn*, Vol. 1 (New Delhi, 1982), 286.

<sup>64</sup> J. Lumbard, "Al-Insân al-Kâmil: Doctrine and Practice," *The Islamic Quarterly: A Review of Islamic Culture*, 38/4 (1994), 277.

unlawful action.<sup>65</sup> To a calligrapher or an illuminator, both internally and externally, *dhikr* is possible in the midst of copying or illuminating the Qur'ân.<sup>66</sup> The reciter, or any pious Muslim, who looks at the illuminated Word will automatically be reminded of the need to remember God by performing prayer and *dhikr* at all times. The invocation and contemplation of the word "Allâh" creates a sort of divine presence in the heart of the Muslim.<sup>67</sup> Muslims believe that it will bring great reward, especially in the hereafter, to bring another Muslim to remembering the Almighty God. "God says : Remember Me, I will remember you".<sup>68</sup> "The Prophet said: If anybody wishes to enter the garden of paradise, let him remember God much."<sup>69</sup> In Islam, the garden of paradise or heaven, has always been the central focus amongst artists.<sup>70</sup> The glorification of God is always at the heart of sacred art in the Islamic world.<sup>71</sup>

An example of the illuminated word "Allâh" found in a Qur'ân of the Safavid period is in a Qur'ân calligraphed by Maqṣūd ʿAlī al-Sharīf al-Tabrīzī al-Maftûlband and illuminated by Bâbâ al-Tabrīzī in 962/1554 AD<sup>72</sup> (see Table 1 Q2). The illuminated word "Allah" on folio 207b (*Sûrah* 33:34) was written in black but with a

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<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.*, 287.

<sup>66</sup> Lumbard, "*Al-Insân al-Kâmil: Doctrine and Practice*", 277.

<sup>67</sup> Chippa, *Beauty*, 4.

<sup>68</sup> Karim, *Imam Ghazâlî's*, 285.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>70</sup> See "Paradise and the Word" by Walter B. Denny, in an exhibition catalogue *Images of Paradise*, ed. Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom (Texas, 1991), 66.

<sup>71</sup> Dodd & Khairallah, *Image*, Vol. I, 7.

<sup>72</sup> CBL Ms.1540 (Arberry no.153).

gold outline. This gold outline could have been added later by Bâbâ al-Tabrîzî since he was the illuminator for the Qur'ân. If that is so, it suggests that the illuminator was especially affected by its meaning and was trying to lay emphasis on these five *âyât* (31-35), but especially *âyah* 34:

"And recite what is rehearsed to you in your homes,  
of the Signs of God and His Wisdom:  
For God understands the finest mysteries and is well-acquainted (with  
them)."<sup>73</sup>

This highlighted word occurs only once in the whole of this Qur'ân, namely here. The word "Allâh" is present twice in this *âyah* 34, yet only the first word "Allâh" is specially illuminated. It refers to the "Signs of God and His Wisdom."

The technique of having a gold outline to the script can be traced as early as 555-556/1160 in the *muhaqqaq* Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ibn Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Isfâhânî in the British Library. The word "Allah" was written in gold three times in *Sûrah* 22:1-5.<sup>74</sup> A similar concept and technique can also be found in the *thulth* Qur'ân copied in 737/1337 by Muḥammad ibn Yûsuf al-Âbârî, probably in Iraq, in the British Library. The word "Allâh" is written in gold three times in *Sûrah* 48:1-3.<sup>75</sup> A fragment of a Qur'ân (*Juz* ' 6) copied in ca. 1337 A.D. in Anatolia or Central Asia,<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, 1116.

<sup>74</sup> Safadi, *IC*, pl.58, p.68.

<sup>75</sup> Safadi, *IC*, pl.31, p.52. James, *QM*, fig.124.

<sup>76</sup> According to James, this fragment may have been copied by *Muhammad b. Shaykh Yûsuf al-(bin?) Âbârî*. This fragment is from *Juz* ' 6 and not *Juz* ' 5 as published in *QB*, 63. James had corrected this mistake in *QM*, 173.

has the word "Allâh" written twice in gold, but with a fine black outline.<sup>77</sup> In another Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿImrân al-Hanafî dated 869/1464,<sup>78</sup> the word "Allâh" is mostly written in gold. All the four pre-Safavid examples seem to be of a similar style, using gold with a fine black outline enveloping the letters. This too is a kind of 'visual *dhikr*' as discussed earlier.

#### 4. The illumination in relation to the size of the Qur'ân

Other than the extra illumination found in them, these five Safavid Qur'âns may be categorised into three out of the four sizes discussed in Chapter Two: size 'A', size 'C' and size 'D'.<sup>79</sup> Q2, Q3 and Q5 are in the size 'C' category, that is between 300 by 400 mm. Q4 is in the 'D' size, that is, 400 mm and above, and Q6 is in size 'A' - between 100 by 200 mm. Size 'C' Qur'âns seem to have more illuminated *âyât* as compared to other sizes of Qur'ân in the Safavid period. As has already been discussed earlier in Chapter Two, perhaps — from the production point of view — size 'C' Qur'âns represent a standard — size Qur'ân, or the most practical and convenient size for the general consumer to handle. Size 'A' and 'D' Qur'âns are perhaps specifically intended for a special type of consumer or audience. The 'A' size Qur'ân, because of its small size, could only be commissioned by an individual for personal and private use. The large 'D' size Qur'ân might have belonged to someone who was very rich, or was meant as a gift in an official capacity, or might even have been dedicated to religious centres such as mosques or madrasahs.

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<sup>77</sup> CBL Ms. 1606 (Arberry no. 54). See James, *QB*, pl.46

<sup>78</sup> CBL Ms. 1518 (Arberry no. 140).

<sup>79</sup> See Chapter 2 for the different sizes of Safavid Qur'âns.

## 5. Preliminary conclusion

Initially, illumination in the Qur'ân relates to the art of book-making whereby the opening and closing pages of a manuscript or a book were always illuminated. The basic structure of the Qur'ân itself indirectly provides opportunities for illumination to take place. These basic structures can be seen in the division of the text. There are 114 *sûrahs*; 7 *manâzil*; 30 *juz'*; 558 *rukû'*; and variable numbers of *hizb*; *rub'*; *nişf* and *thulth* markings as well as *sajdah âyât* used for decoration. Furthermore, even within the text itself, there are *âyah* markers which the scribe/illuminator could consider for illumination. From a single *âyah* mark to as many as 5 and 10 *âyât* markers can be added in the text to facilitate reading. Illumination developed along these lines until the Safavid period.

One interesting development in the Qur'ânic art of the Safavid period can be seen in the illuminated *âyât*. This illumination is not mere decoration<sup>80</sup> but also reflects religious function<sup>81</sup> or iconography. Indirectly, it can be said to reflect the state of *ilm* (knowledge) and *amal* (practice) on the part of the scribe/illuminator or the period. From one perspective, the illuminated Qur'ân is, in many ways, a dialogue between man and God. From another perspective, this dialogue is not only between man and his Creator, but also between man and man towards God: in other words, between an artist and his audience and their efforts to know God.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> E. Kühnel, *Islamic Art and Architecture* (Cornell, 1966), 24.

<sup>81</sup> Sir T. Arnold, *The Old and New Testaments in Muslim Religious Art* (London, 1932), 1.

<sup>82</sup> J. A. Williams, *The Word of Islam* (London, 1994), 157.



The five illuminated Safavid Qur'âns under close scrutiny here show that the scribes/illuminators used several approaches to illuminate their Qur'âns. All these approaches were based on the existing structure within the Qur'ân itself - in this case, on the division of the text. Along with beautiful marginal designs, illuminated *âyât* were also used as indicators for the division of the Qur'ân. There are four identifiable groups of illuminated *âyât*. The first group concentrated on the physical aspect of the book (Qur'ân) as well as the general concept and meaning of the Qur'ân. In the physical aspect, three main areas were identified. They are the opening double-spread illuminated page which comprises *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. The second main area is in *Sûrah* 18, which is at the centre of the Qur'ân, and finally the closing *sûrahs* of the Qur'ân. In other words, the illuminated *âyât* were meant to indicate the beginning, the centre and the end part of a single-volume Qur'ân. Coincidentally, these three main parts can be interpreted as having an indirect symbolic meaning concerning the Qur'ân. *Sûrah* 1 is man's prayer to God and is the essence of the Qur'ân. It can also be said as the introduction of the Qur'ân. *Sûrah* 2 onwards is God's answer to man's prayer. *Sûrah* 18 is believed to be the 'heart' of the Qur'ân and it has a religious significance relating to the spiritual concept of the 'heart'. Finally, the last *sûrahs* are the end of the text itself as well of as the end of the illuminated text. These *sûrahs* depict God teaching man to seek His protection. Tradition avers that all these *sûrahs* have their own special merits and meaning to Muslims.

The second group of illuminated *âyât* are used to indicate the beginning of a *sûrah*. Not all the opening *âyât* of the *sûrahs* were illuminated. This is because there is already a *sûrah* panel to indicate a new *sûrah*. Only when it is necessary, in terms of artistic composition are these *âyât* illuminated. Similarly, this concept can also be found in the third and fourth group of illuminated *âyât*. The marking of all the 30 *juz* by means of illuminated *âyât* in Q2, Q3; Q4; Q5 and Q6, were consistently correct.

On the other hand, there are only three Qur'âns (Q2, Q4 and Q6) with illuminated *âyat* to mark the beginning a *rukû*<sup>c</sup>. Not all the opening *âyat* of the 558 *rukû*<sup>c</sup>s in a single volume Qur'ân were illuminated. Q2, Q4 and Q6, each has only one portion of illuminated *âyat* and the rest were marked with the letter *ayn* in the margin. ?

Besides the above illuminated *âyat* that functioned as markers for the different division of the Qur'ân, individual illuminated words can also be found. This illuminated word is the word "Allâh" itself, and it is not a device to facilitate reading. This illuminated word functioned on a different level, and suggests personal involvement on the part of the scribe/illuminator while decorating the Qur'ân. The scribe/illuminator, it may be assumed, desired to be in a state of communion with the word of God. The very fact that the scribe/illuminator is involved in the copying of the Qur'ân brings him nearer to God. Thus, the very least that a man could do is to remember Him always. This remembrance of God by means of *dhikr* is expressed visually by illuminating the word "Allâh" in the Qur'ân. This is a clear indication of the personal involvement of the scribe/illuminator in copying the Qur'ân. The scribe/illuminator knows his role is to facilitate reading and understanding of the Qur'ân, and to instil a sense of piety, humility and awareness of the sacred Book in his reader. All these devices are, in short, meant to guide the reader.

Finally, from another angle, the amount of illumination found in these five Safavid Qur'âns has highlighted certain preferences in the size of the Qur'ân. It is found that a 300 by 400 mm Qur'ân has the most illumination in it. This Qur'ân can be regarded as the standard-size Qur'ân and easy to handle. The size and the illumination found in these Safavid Qur'âns, reveals their high quality as well as the versatility of their scribes/illuminators in producing illuminated Qur'âns.

## **Chapter 7**

**The frontispieces and *shamsahs* of one-volume Qur'âns from the 11th to the 16th century, with special reference to their use of Qur'ânic texts**

**1. The illuminated frontispieces of single-volume Qur'âns : the pre-Safavid period**

**2. The use of Qur'ânic texts in Safavid Qur'ânic frontispieces**

**2.1. The content of the Qur'ânic texts used in Safavid Qur'ânic frontispieces**

**3. The design of inscribed *shamsahs***

**3.1. The design of uninscribed *shamsahs***

**4. Preliminary Conclusion**

## 1. Illuminated frontispieces of single-volume Qur'âns: the pre-Safavid period

As in the medieval West, frontispieces formed part of the tradition of the arts of the Islamic book. The Qur'ân resembles the typical Islamic book in terms of design, although it is not certain which had the chronological priority. Nevertheless, to a certain extent, they clearly influenced each other. According to James, the double-frontispiece is also known as "carpet page"<sup>1</sup> or "title page"<sup>2</sup>. What ever its name, this decorated page is placed prior to the actual text of the Qur'ân. Some Qur'âns may also contain finispieces<sup>3</sup> placed at the end of the text. Sometimes the first two pages of frontispieces and the last two pages of finispieces were given full illumination.<sup>4</sup> Since these designs resemble carpet designs found in the Islamic world,<sup>5</sup> the term 'carpet page' seems appropriate.

Prior to the 11th century A.D., illuminated frontispieces were generally of horizontal rectangular format with a palmette attached to the side.<sup>6</sup> Illuminated frontispieces with verses from the Qur'ân have yet to be found from this period. Illuminated frontispieces with palmettes can be considered as the principal model for

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<sup>1</sup> James, *QB*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Kühnel, 'Koran Manuscripts', in *The Minor Arts of Islam*, tr. K. Watson (New York, 1971), 26.

<sup>3</sup> James, *QM*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> S. L. Poole, *The Art of Saracens in Egypt* (London, 1888), 300. See D. James, *Islamic Masterpieces of The Chester Beatty Library* (London, 1981), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Poole, *Art*, 300. See L. Golombek, in her chapter on 'The Draped Universe of Islam', in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. P. P. Soucek (London, 1988), 36.

<sup>6</sup> See James, *QB*, pl.4; and Déroche, *AT*, pl.24.

the 30 *sûrah* headings in a single-volume Qur'ân, or for each single-volume of a 30-part Qur'ân.<sup>7</sup> Martin Lings terms this attached palmette "*shujayra* [*sic*] or little tree",<sup>8</sup> and it has a symbolic meaning as well as purpose in relation to the content of the Qur'ân. Ettinghausen refers to the basic shape in such frontispieces as 'tabula ansata'.<sup>9</sup> In this first phase of illuminated Qur'âns, the design of the frontispiece suggests a more impersonal approach on the part of the artist than may be detected in later frontispieces which contain specially selected Qur'ânic texts. Indirectly, of course, such illuminated frontispieces were meant to allow for an artistic statement without infringing the text. Later artists observed this same tradition. The frontispiece can be said to be the best way for the artist to express his inner feelings about the whole concept of the sacred book. He is at liberty to demonstrate his artistic skill - but within the accepted tradition of illuminated Qur'âns. Usually, the nature of the illuminated design corresponds in quite significant ways to the nature of the script. Thus a simple script will be followed by an overall simple design. An example of this can be found in the North African or Egyptian Qur'ân, datable to the end of the 9th century AD, described by Déroche, in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 1).<sup>10</sup>

From the turn of the 11th century A.D. some significant changes emerged in the form of the Qur'ân itself. Gradually, the horizontal format Qur'ân became less popular and was replaced by the vertical format Qur'ân. And this development

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of this can best be seen in some of the colour plates published by Déroche, in *AT*.

<sup>8</sup> See Lings, *QACI*, pp. 71-77.

<sup>9</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Koran Illuminations from the late 9th to the 14th Century", in *Arab Painting* (New York, 1962), 169.

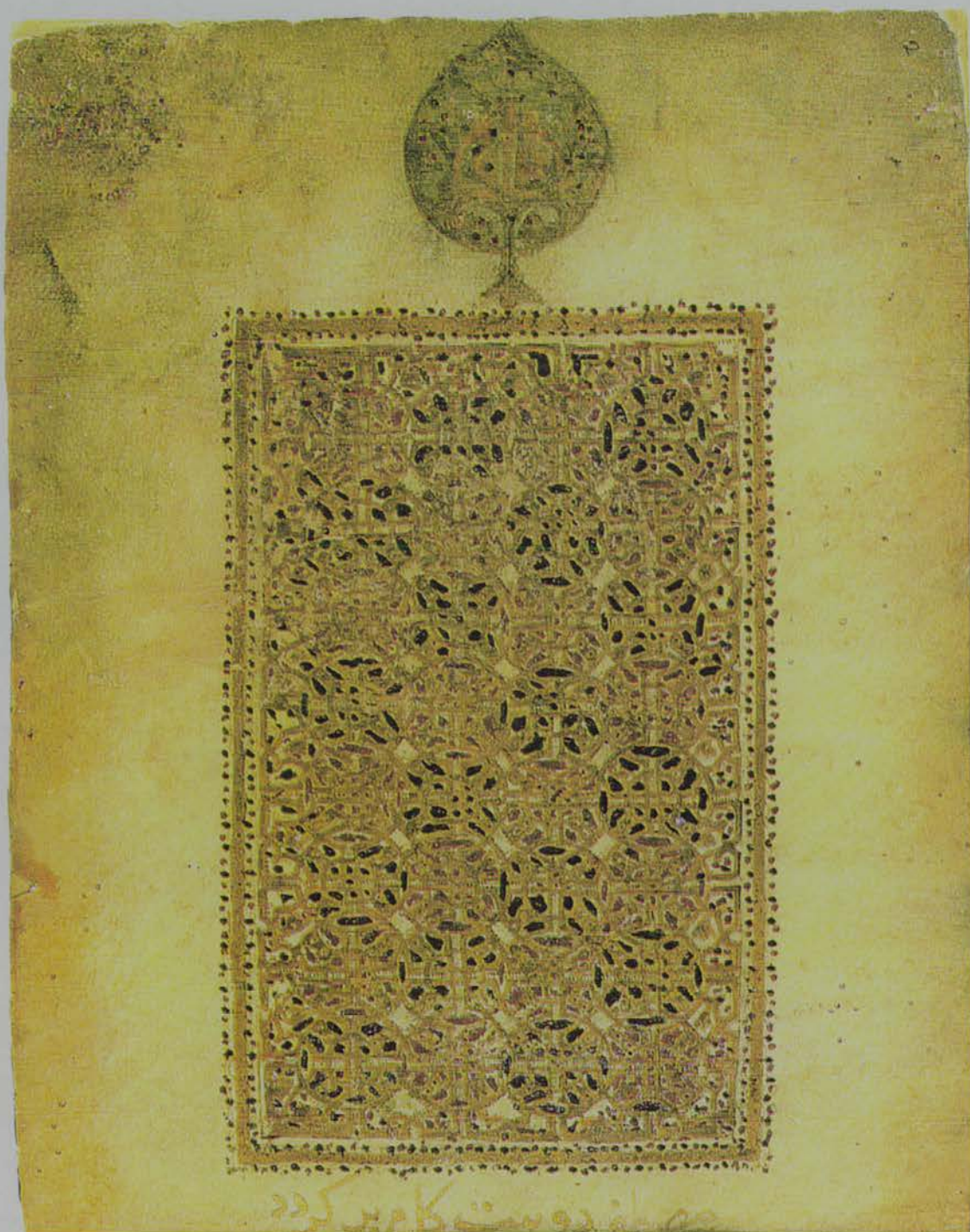
<sup>10</sup> Déroche, *AT*, pp. 72-73.



extends to the overall internal design as well. Nevertheless, traces of older tradition can still be found and occur repeatedly in later designs, for example the notion that the Qur'ân can be illuminated and can have a frontispiece. The physical format of the book may change, but the tradition and the concept of an illuminated Qur'ân remains. The marking of a number of *sûrah*, a *juz'*, a *sajdah* and the division of *âyât* within a *juz'* continues to follow established practice.<sup>11</sup> The relevant rules and regulations had already crystallised prior to the 11th century A.D. In terms of the style of presentation, or of the design itself, these markers gradually changed. Qur'âns after the 11th century usually have one of two main styles of frontispieces. The latter can either comprise pure decoration, or they can contain inscriptions as well as illumination. Inscriptions used in such frontispieces were either statements from the artist or verses taken from the Qur'ân itself. These two main styles of frontispieces were progressively experimented with until the end of the 15th century. By the beginning of the Safavid period a standard practice had emerged in the decoration of frontispieces.

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<sup>11</sup> See E. Atil, 'Illuminated Manuscripts' in *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamlûks* (Washington D.C., 1981), 25.



Pl. 1. The frontispiece from a part 2 of a 30-part Qur'ân. North Africa or Egypt, end of the 9th century A.D. Khalili, QUR372.

## 2. The use of Qur'anic texts in Safavid Qur'anic frontispieces

### (a). Before 1600 A.D

The incorporation of *âyât* in frontispieces probably begins as early as the 11th century A.D.<sup>12</sup> The person responsible for the introduction of these *âyât* is not known. According to Martin Lings, initially there is "a minority of founder artists"<sup>13</sup> who set the tradition which is followed generation after generation. There are only certain *âyât* which are chosen for the frontispieces. This suggests that some conscious effort was made in the selection of these *âyât* for frontispieces, and that they are intended to serve some specific purpose. James argues, however, that these decorative pages "serve no functional purpose whatsoever"<sup>14</sup>. But a contrary argument may be maintained. This is because, from an abstract or symbolic point of view, these pages — whether with or without verses from the Qur'ân — do have some contextual message. For example, an uninscribed frontispiece or "carpet page"<sup>15</sup> is said to resemble an Islamic carpet. Islamic carpets are frequently regarded as a symbol for the garden of paradise.<sup>16</sup> Symbolically or metaphorically, since then the characteristics of an uninscribed illuminated frontispiece are on occasion quite similar

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<sup>12</sup> James, *QM*, 24-25. See also James, *MS*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Lings, *QACI*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> James, *QB*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See D. Stewart, 'The Paradise of a Persian Garden', in *Early Islam* (Amsterdam, 1967), pp.174-175, I. Bennett (ed.), *Rugs & Carpets of the World* (London, 1977), 50; D. Black (ed.), 'Symbolism in Carpets', in *The Atlas of Rugs & Carpets* (London, 1985), pp.36-42; and N. Titley and F. Wood, *Oriental Gardens* (London, 1991), 26.



to those of a carpet,<sup>17</sup> the concept of paradise is also applicable here. In other words, there is a kind of cross-over in terms of meaning from carpet design to frontispiece design. It can be said, from an artist's point of view that in such a frontispiece the content of the Qur'ân was symbolically expressed.

The studies conducted by Amy Briggs in the 1940s have shown that there is a close relationship between carpet design and manuscript painting.<sup>18</sup> This approach was further supported by Cecil Edwards in his book entitled 'The Persian Carpet', published in 1953.<sup>19</sup> It is generally accepted that there are very few surviving examples of carpets before the 16th century.<sup>20</sup> According to Ettinghausen, the best Persian carpets are from 1500 to 1625 A.D.<sup>21</sup> The best source for 15th-century carpet designs are Persian miniature paintings that contain garden and architectural scenes. Examples may be found in the Khwâdjû Kirmânî manuscript in the British Museum, copied in Baghdad in 1396 A.D., and these extend throughout the 15th century.<sup>22</sup> Briggs came out with two broad characteristics for Timurid carpet design, namely geometric and arabesque, the latter term including flower designs. She concluded that the carpets depicted in Timurid miniature paintings are typical of the

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<sup>17</sup> A. Briggs, "Timurid Carpets", *Ars Islamica* Vol. 7 (1940), 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-54, and in Vol. 11-12 (1946), pp. 146-164.

<sup>19</sup> A. Cecil Edwards, *The Persian Carpet: A Survey of the carpet-weaving Industry of Persia* (London, 1953), pp.7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Briggs, "Timurid Carpets", 20.

<sup>21</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Muslim Decorative Arts and Painting, their Nature and Impact on the Medieval West", in *Islam and the Medieval West: A Loan Exhibition at the University Art Gallery, April 6 - May 4, 1975*, compiled and ed. S. Ferber (New York, 1975), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Briggs, "Timurid Carpets", 21.

carpet designs generally used in the period.<sup>23</sup> While it is possible to make a connection between manuscript paintings and carpets in the Timurid period, it is equally possible to see this connection in the Safavid period.<sup>24</sup> The design formula of the Safavid frontispiece, especially in the arabesque-flower design and the hidden structure, is similar in style to certain Safavid carpet designs. There is the same motif at the centre of the field,<sup>25</sup> that is the *shamsah*, with a quarter *shamsah* design at the four corners (compare Pl. 2 with Pl. 18). A comparable example can be seen in a carpet made by Maqsûd of Kashân, dated 946/1539-40. This renowned carpet (see Pl. 2), now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, came from the Ardabil mosque where Shâh Ismâ'îl and Shaikh Safi al-Dîn are buried.<sup>26</sup> A similar style can also be found in the 'hunting carpet' in the Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan, dated 929/1522<sup>27</sup> The subject matter of this carpet is different from that of the Ardabil carpet. Of course, this carpet is unsuitable for a mosque because of the depiction of figures and animal forms (see Pl. 3). Thus, it is a secular carpet probably made for a wealthy patron. But what is pertinent here is the hidden structural design, which is similar to the Ardabil carpet as well as resembling the frontispieces of illuminated Qur'âns. Furthermore, this structural design was also extended to most illuminated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and 2 in Safavid Qur'âns. Comparable examples can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân from the Chester Beatty Library,<sup>28</sup> and an example in the Khalili collection, from Shîrâz, datable ca. 1525-1550 A.D.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Briggs, "Timurid Carpets", *Ars Islamica* Vol. 11-12 (1946), 146.

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, *Persian*, 8.

<sup>27</sup> P. L. Baker, *Islamic Textiles* (London, 1995), pp. 122-123.

<sup>28</sup> Dublin, CBL Ms. 1558, fols. 2V-3R. See James, *QB*, pl.59.



From quite another perspective, illuminated frontispieces could also reflect an overall artistic understanding of the concept of 'light'. This concept of 'light' refers, of course, to the word of God itself in its entirety. And thus, in inscribed frontispieces, the *âyah* itself — whatever its literal content — has the light of God in it and is thus directly connected, in a general sense, to the body of text which follows. In other words, it is contextualised. James, while accepting the importance of these *âyât* in such frontispieces, also contradicted himself by claiming that these frontispieces serve no purpose.<sup>30</sup> Muslims believe that the design types or styles of these frontispieces do have definite purposes, especially in the context of the overall book form of the Qur'ân. Otherwise they would definitely not pass through the censorship of the religious establishment, the *ʿulamâ'*, as well as that of pious Muslims at large. The acceptance of any decorative elements in the Qur'ân, from the time of Ibn al-Bawwâb (d. 413/1022) onwards, had already undergone a long theological consideration and assessment for approval.<sup>31</sup> Presumably, the selection of specific *âyât* for these frontispieces was carried out with the consent of the sultans, *amirs* or *ʿulamâ'*.<sup>32</sup> Or perhaps the artist himself could be a pious person<sup>33</sup> who knew the Qur'ân well and was able to choose the most appropriate *âyât* for the frontispieces he produced, or at any rate *âyât* that meant something to him. There is nothing unQur'ânic about having such texts in frontispieces, for the quotations are themselves from the Qur'ân. James

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<sup>29</sup> Khalili, QUR 441. See James, *AT*, pl.41. See Christie's, 23rd April 1981, lot 100; and Sotheby's, 12th October 1990, lot 219.

<sup>30</sup> James, *QB*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> See James, *QM*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Atil, "*Illuminated Manuscripts*", 24.

<sup>33</sup> See E. Whelan, in "Early Islam: Emerging Patterns", in *Islamic Art & Patronage*, ed. E. Atil (622-1050) (New York, 1990), 51.

regarded this frontispiece as having a "metaphysical character", "which by any standards must be reckoned among the great works of religious art produced by mankind".<sup>34</sup>

The period before the 16th century had been a dynamic one, especially in the development of style in the frontispieces of illuminated Qur'âns. This can be detected by the use of the *âyah* found in these frontispieces. Only some particular *âyât* were chosen from the 6,616 *âyât*<sup>35</sup> in the Qur'ân. These chosen *âyât* can either be a single *âyah* or a combination of *âyât*, each one complete. They were inscribed either at the top and bottom *ʿunwâns* or at the centre of a *shamsah* design. Sometimes, these *âyât* were presented in both the *ʿunwân* and *shamsah* design. Usually, these *âyât* will continue in the next page of the frontispiece in order to be meaningful and to serve their purpose. In other words, a double-page frontispiece is required to accommodate the entire text. The particular choice of *âyât* may be significant. This was perhaps true especially at the beginning of this process. Later, it became standard practice to have an inscribed frontispiece in the Qur'ân and only certain standard *âyât* were selected for this purpose. Any shift in the choice of *âyât* would then suggest a changed convention of taste or a changed preference among the artists or the patrons.<sup>36</sup> The survey conducted shows that — before the Safavid period — the *âyât* in the frontispieces come from at least ten different *sûrahs* in the Qur'ân.<sup>37</sup> There seems to

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<sup>34</sup> James, *QB*, 11. See Atil, *"Illuminated Manuscripts"*, 26.

<sup>35</sup> See al-Fârûqî & al-Fârûqî in their chapter on "The Qur'ân", in *Cultural*, pp.100-111.

<sup>36</sup> Oleg Grabar mentions three types of patronage: a) caliphate, b) urban patronage, and c) communal patronage, in his chapter on 'Patronage in Islamic Art', in *Islamic Art & Patronage*, ed. E. Atil (New York), pp. 27-39.

<sup>37</sup> Presumably, more than one *âyah* was incorporated into some frontispieces. Some examples represented in the list below consist of only a single frontispiece and not of a

be some kind of trend or development in the content of these inscribed frontispieces. They are as follows:

**The use of âyât for Qur'ânic frontispieces, 11th-15th centuries A.D.**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title of <i>Sûrah</i>/Âyah</b>	<b>No. of <i>Âyât</i>.</b> <sup>38</sup>
1).	<i>Sûrah al-Mâ'idah</i> (5) : 100-101.	= 2 <i>âyât</i> .
2).	<i>Sûrah al-An'âm</i> (6) : 115.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .
3).	<i>Sûrah Hûd</i> (11) : 88.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .
4).	<i>Sûrah al-Isrâ'</i> (17) : 80-88.	= 9 <i>âyât</i> .
5).	<i>Sûrah al-Shu'arâ'</i> (26) : 192-6.	= 5 <i>âyât</i> .
6).	<i>Sûrah al-Fuṣṣilat</i> (41) : 42.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .
7).	<i>Sûrah al-Jâthiyah</i> (45) : 3.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .
8).	<i>Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah</i> (56) : 77-80.	= 4 <i>âyât</i> .
9).	<i>Sûrah al-Taṭfîf</i> (83) : 25-26.	= 2 <i>âyât</i> .
10).	<i>Sûrah al-Bayyinah</i> (98) : 1.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .

**The use of âyât for Qur'ânic frontispieces after the 16th century A.D.**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Title of <i>Sûrah</i>/Âyah.</b>	<b>No. of <i>Âyât</i>.</b>
1.	<i>Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah</i> (56) : 77-80.	= 4 <i>âyât</i> .
2.	<i>Sûrah al-Isrâ'</i> (17) : 88.	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .
3.	<i>Sûrah al-An'am</i> (6) : 115	= 1 <i>âyah</i> .

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full double frontispiece. Normally, however, these *âyât* were written across two pages of the frontispiece, and were not confined to a single page.

<sup>38</sup> Normally there should be frontispieces in a single-volume Qur'ân, but unfortunately, not every Qur'ân that has come down to us still contains these frontispieces. These pages are, for some tastes, the most beautiful pages of the Qur'ân and were probably taken out to be sold separately.

The above lists show that there does exist a certain pattern in the choice and placement of the *âyat* in these frontispieces. They can be either from a single *sûrah* or from a combination of *sûrahs*. Usually, if these *âyat* are taken from a single *sûrah*, the meaning or message put across is precise and is particularly suitable for the frontispieces (see 2.1 below). This double-spread frontispiece which contains a small portion of Qur'ânic text is essentially different from the text pages of the Qur'ân, for it carries a specific meaning about the Qur'ân as a whole. Thus, it suggests that the artist had a certain liberty to express himself, especially in the choice of the *âyat* used in frontispiece. On the other hand, in copying the rest of the Qur'ân, he was just following the stipulated scheme or tradition already established before his time.<sup>39</sup> It was just a matter of choice of which model of script<sup>40</sup> to follow out of the many ones available. The more work that was incorporated in an illuminated frontispiece, the more expensive it would of course be — and this might also apply to extra inscriptions. Thus, a single *âyat* from a single *sûrah* could well be the most standard practice and also the cheapest solution for the production of multiple copies of the Qur'ân. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 17:80-88 are typical examples that were repeatedly used in this way. Both these *sûrahs* or *âyat* are commonly used in illuminated frontispieces. These *âyat* could have been used as early as the 11th century, when the idea of using writing in Qur'ânic frontispiece tradition was first introduced. An example of such an inscribed frontispiece can be seen in a single — volume Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, from Iraq or Iran, datable dated ca. 1000-1050 A.D.<sup>41</sup> Unfortunately, this particular Qur'ân contains an inscribed frontispiece whose text comprises not verses from the Qur'ân but statements from the artist

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<sup>39</sup> James, *QM*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> See Whelan, "*Early Islam: Emerging Patterns*", 53.

<sup>41</sup> See James, *MS*, fig. 1.

himself. These statements were written in Kûfic script and without diacritical marks. The poor condition of this frontispiece together with the style of writing combine to make reading almost impossible. Nevertheless, the inscription on the blue background at the top semi-circular-shaped design can be translated as: "God alone is sufficient for me".<sup>42</sup> The tradition of the inscribed frontispiece continues in use up to the present day. The unQur'ânic text or the artist's personal statement was gradually replaced by verses from the Qur'ân itself. Presumably because it was felt to be undesirable to have any text that was not Qur'ânic in such a prominent position. The most popular verses used were *Sûrah* 56:77-80. If these *âyât* are not found in frontispieces, they will usually be on the cover of the Qur'ân (see Pl. 4)<sup>43</sup>. An early example of *Sûrah* 56:77-80 used in a frontispiece can be seen in a Qur'ân copied in Iraq or Iran by Qutlugh ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdallâh and dated 634/1236-7 (see Pl. 5),<sup>44</sup> and in a 14th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library (see Pl. 6),<sup>45</sup> as well as in a 15th-century Qur'ân from Istanbul (see Pl. 7).<sup>46</sup>

Frontispieces that contained more than one *sûrah* are equally important. Close study reveals that there are at least two more types of frontispieces with more than one *sûrah*. The first type of frontispiece contains two *âyât* taken from two *sûrahs*. An example of this can be seen in the Qur'ân illuminated by Muḥammad ibn Mubâdir

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<sup>42</sup> I would like to thank my dear friend al-Ustaz Md. Som b. Sugimon, for his efforts in making it possible to translate this beautiful inscription. Also to Dr. Carole Hillenbrand who had kindly check and corrected the English translation.

<sup>43</sup> See James. *QB*, pl.63.

<sup>44</sup> See James *MS*, fig. 9.

<sup>45</sup> CBL Ms. 1470 (Arberry no. 137).

<sup>46</sup> See James, *AT*, fig.21.



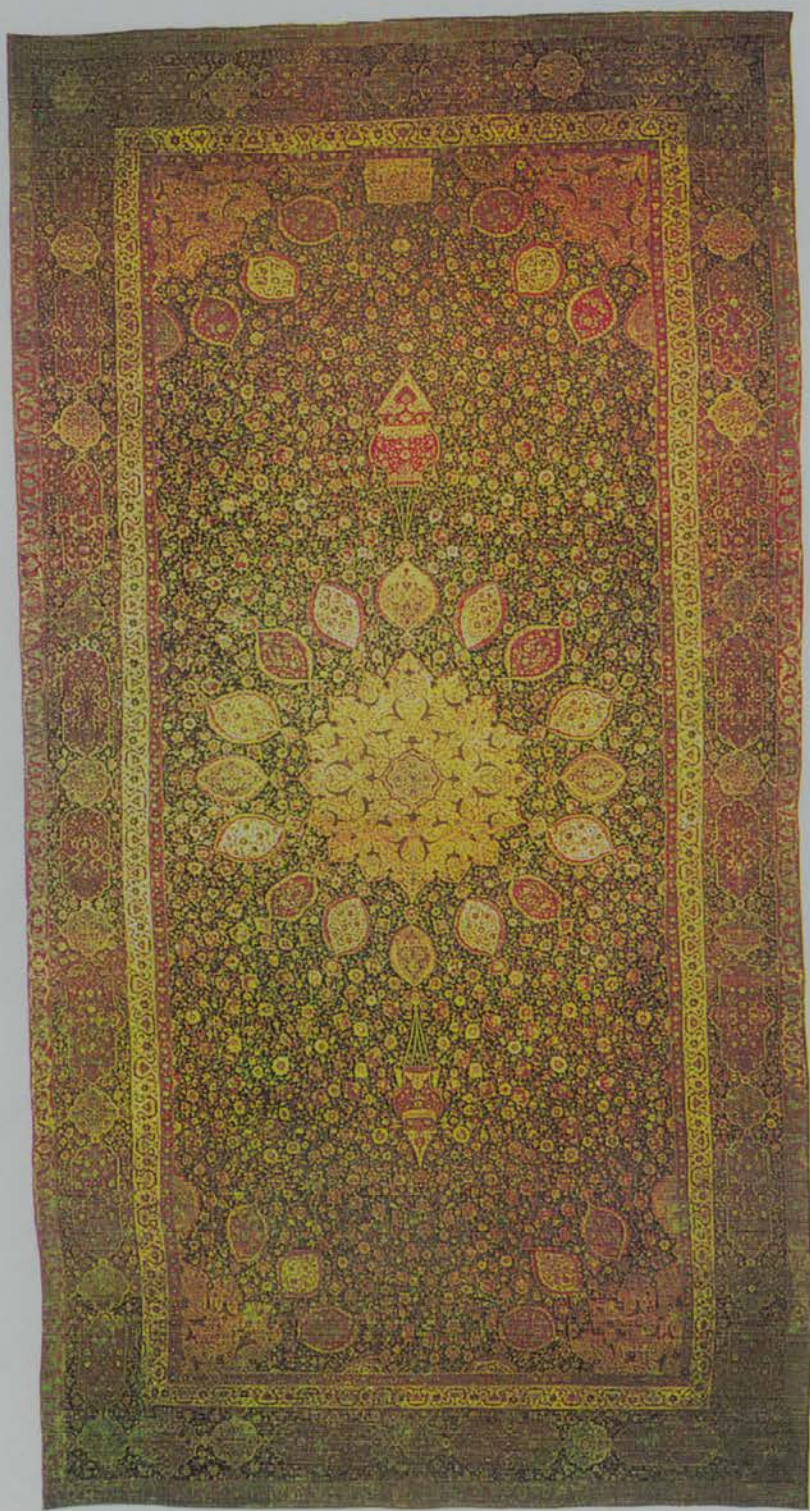
datable ca. 1306-10 and made in Cairo (see Pl. 8). This particular Qur'ân contains double frontispieces, one leaf containing both *Sûrah* 45:3 and *Sûrah* 98:1.<sup>47</sup> The second type contains a double-page of lobed medallions with two *âyât* from two different *sûrahs*, one *ayah* on each page and followed by a double-page frontispiece with a single *ayah* from a different *sûrah*, but this time written continuously from right-hand to the left-hand leaf. All these three *âyât* on two successive double-page spreads were taken from three different *sûrahs*. One good example is in an Egyptian Qur'ân dated 844/1440., copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdallâh Yusuf ibn Baha-yi [*sic*] al-Dîn al-Shâfi<sup>c</sup>i al-Miṣrî (see Pl. 9). This Qur'ân begins with a lobed medallion which contains *Sûrah* 56:77-80, and ends<sup>48</sup> with another containing *Sûrah* 83:25-26. The frontispiece on folios 1b-2a consists of top and bottom panels containing *Sûrah* 26:192-195.<sup>49</sup> This Qur'ân comprises both frontispiece and finispiece. The pattern of having *âyât* in the frontispiece is here extended to the finispiece, which has *Sûrah* 6:115. All these extra passages of text used prior to the main text of the Qur'ân might suggest a degree of extra financial support in propagating such a tradition. The more elaborate a Qur'ân was, the higher would the commissioning fee be, reflecting the extra cost of production. Depending on how illumination and calligraphy are combined and on whether the work is that of a recognised master or not, the presence of *âyât* in frontispieces might result in the manuscript commanding a higher price.

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<sup>47</sup> James published only the left page, and not the right page. Given the custom that, when *âyât* are used in double frontispieces, both leaves contain *âyât*, it is assumed here that, in this case too, there are also preceding *âyât* written on the right-hand page; but there is no record of what this page looks like. See James, *QM*, fig.29.

<sup>48</sup> This phraseology is that of David James. It is ambiguous, for it could be taken to mean that at the very end of this Qur'ân there is a medallion with *Sûrah* 83:25-6. The intended meaning, however, appears to be that the medallion contains a very long text comprising *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 83:25-6. Unfortunately this medallion is not illustrated by James.

<sup>49</sup> See James, *AT*, fig.13.

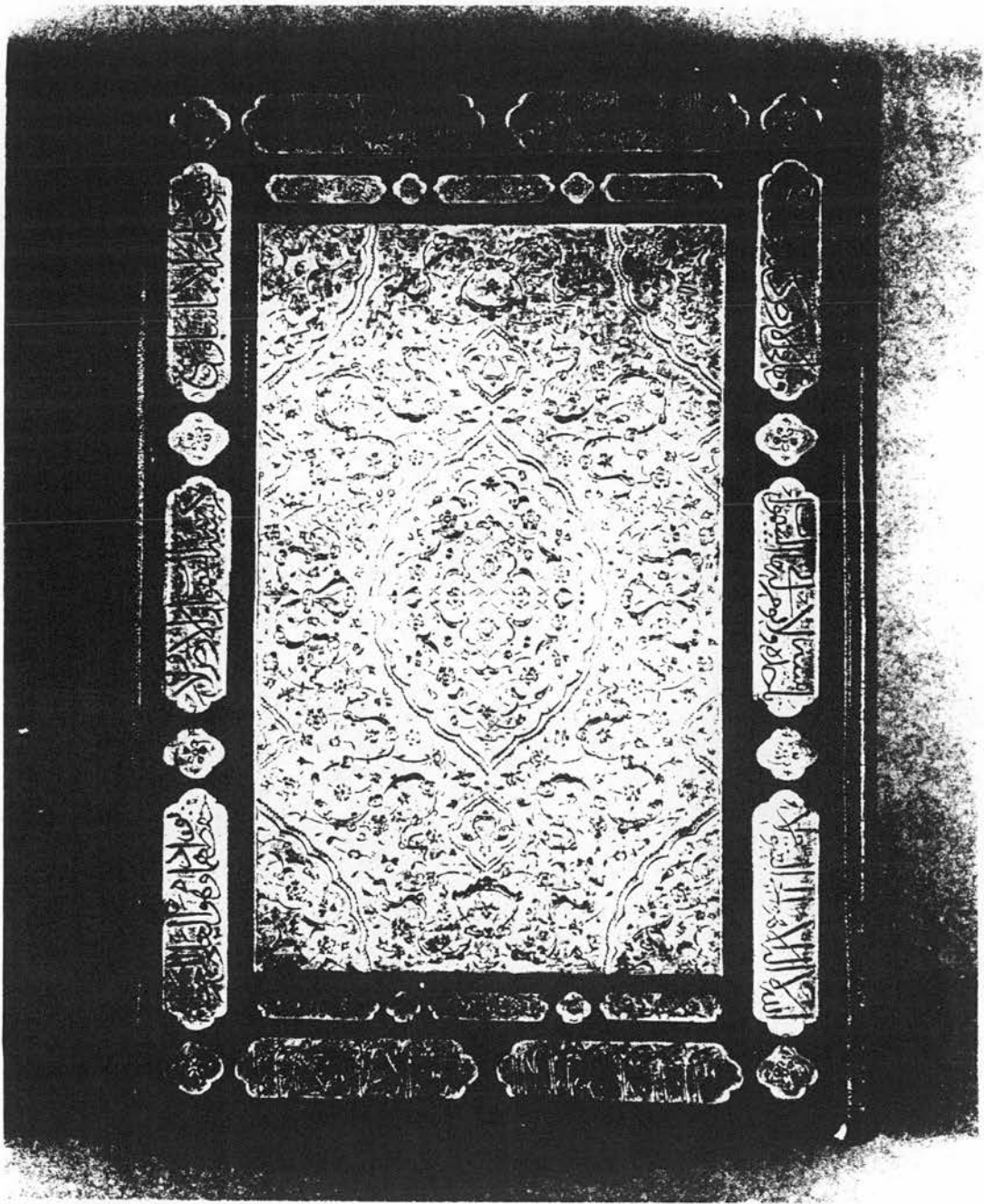


Pl. 2. The Ardabil carpet. Signed by Maqsûd of Kashân and dated 946/1539-40.  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.





Pl. 3. Safavid 'Hunting' carpet, dated 929/1522 A.D. Milan.



Pl. 4. Qur'ân Cover. Iran 16th Century A.D. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry No. 162).





Pl. 5. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân.  
Iran or Iraq, dated 634/1236-7. Khalili, QUR704.





Pl. 6. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 14th century A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1470 (Arberry no. 137).





Pl. 7. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân.  
Istanbul, ca. 865-875/1460-1470. Khalili, QUR34.





Pl. 8. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Illuminated by Muhammad ibn Mubâdir, Cairo, ca. 706-710/1306-10. CBL Ms. 1457 (Arberry no. 60).





Pl. 9. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Egypt, 844/1440.  
Scribe: <sup>c</sup>Abdallâh Yusuf ibn Baha-yî al-Dîn al-Shâfi<sup>c</sup>î al-Misrî. Khalilî, QUR241.

**b). After 1600 A.D.**

By 1600 A.D., the dynamism found in the inscribed frontispieces in previous centuries gradually started to decline. Not many Qur'âns now have frontispieces and those that still maintained this tradition contained only some *âyât* from a single *sûrah*. In Safavid Qur'âns, only two *sûrahs* were frequently used: *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 17:88. *Sûrah* 17:88 seems to be the most frequently used. Of the eleven<sup>50</sup> examples cited (see Pls. 10 - 19), eight<sup>51</sup> contain *Sûrah* 17:88. Only one Qur'ân contains *Sûrah* 56:77-80, namely the Qur'ân probably from Herât datable ca. 1490-1510 A.D. (see Pl. 18).<sup>52</sup> The remaining two Qur'âns contain in one case *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 6:115, and in the other case *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 17:88. The former is from Istanbul, and is datable ca. 1550-1560 A.D. (see Pl. 19),<sup>53</sup> while the latter is a 16th-century Qur'ân from the Chester Beatty Library (see Pl. 20).<sup>54</sup> These examples show that *Sûrah* 17:88 appeared in ten of the eleven frontispieces, while in comparison there were only three examples of *Sûrah* 56:77-80. On the other hand, it can be said with confidence that the tradition of frontispieces that used only two *sûrahs* survived until the middle of the 16th century. As for the style of single-*sûrah* frontispieces, this

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<sup>50</sup> See CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157), CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155); CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154); CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163); CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164) and CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156). See JRULM 44[754] and JRULM 45[797]. See James, *AT*, figs. 30, 50 and 56.

<sup>51</sup> See CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157), CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155); CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154); CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163); CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164); CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156); JRULM 44[754] and JRULM 45[797].

<sup>52</sup> See James, *AT*, fig. 30.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 56.

<sup>54</sup> See CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).

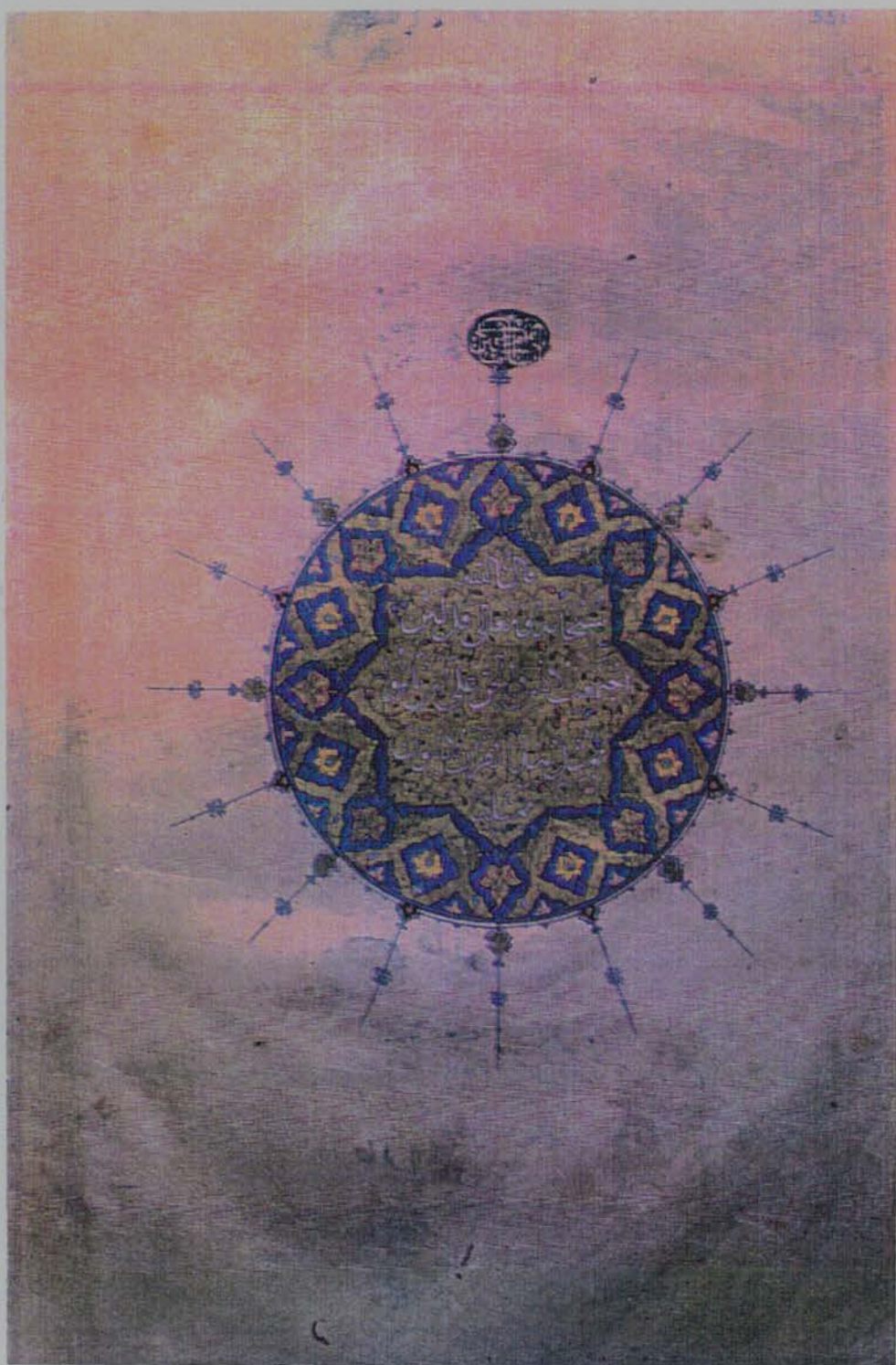


represented a long-standing tradition and was popular among calligraphers. It had survived until the middle of the Safavid period. So far, in this study, no inscribed frontispieces have been discovered after the middle of the Safavid period. This is not to claim, however, that there are none at all. It is also plain that there is a tremendous shift in preferences for the *âyât* used for frontispieces. The preference for *Sûrah* 56:77-80, prior to the 16th century<sup>55</sup>, as shown in this study, is as follows: in the sixteen examples of frontispieces cited, *Sûrah* 56:77-80 appears eight times; *Sûrah* 26:192-196 appears three times; *Sûrah* 41:42 appears twice, and the other *sûrahs* (as stated above) appear only once. Yet in this period *Sûrah* 17:88 appears only once. This shows that *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was the most popular *sûrah* used for Qur'anic frontispiece before the 16th century. But from the 16th century onwards, this situation changed. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 became less popular and was taken over by *Sûrah* 17:88. The reason why this *sûrah* became popular is not known. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was taken out of its usual place in the frontispiece and placed on the cover or spine of the Qur'ân,<sup>56</sup> and this avoided the usage of this *sûrah* twice in the decorated areas of the Qur'ân.

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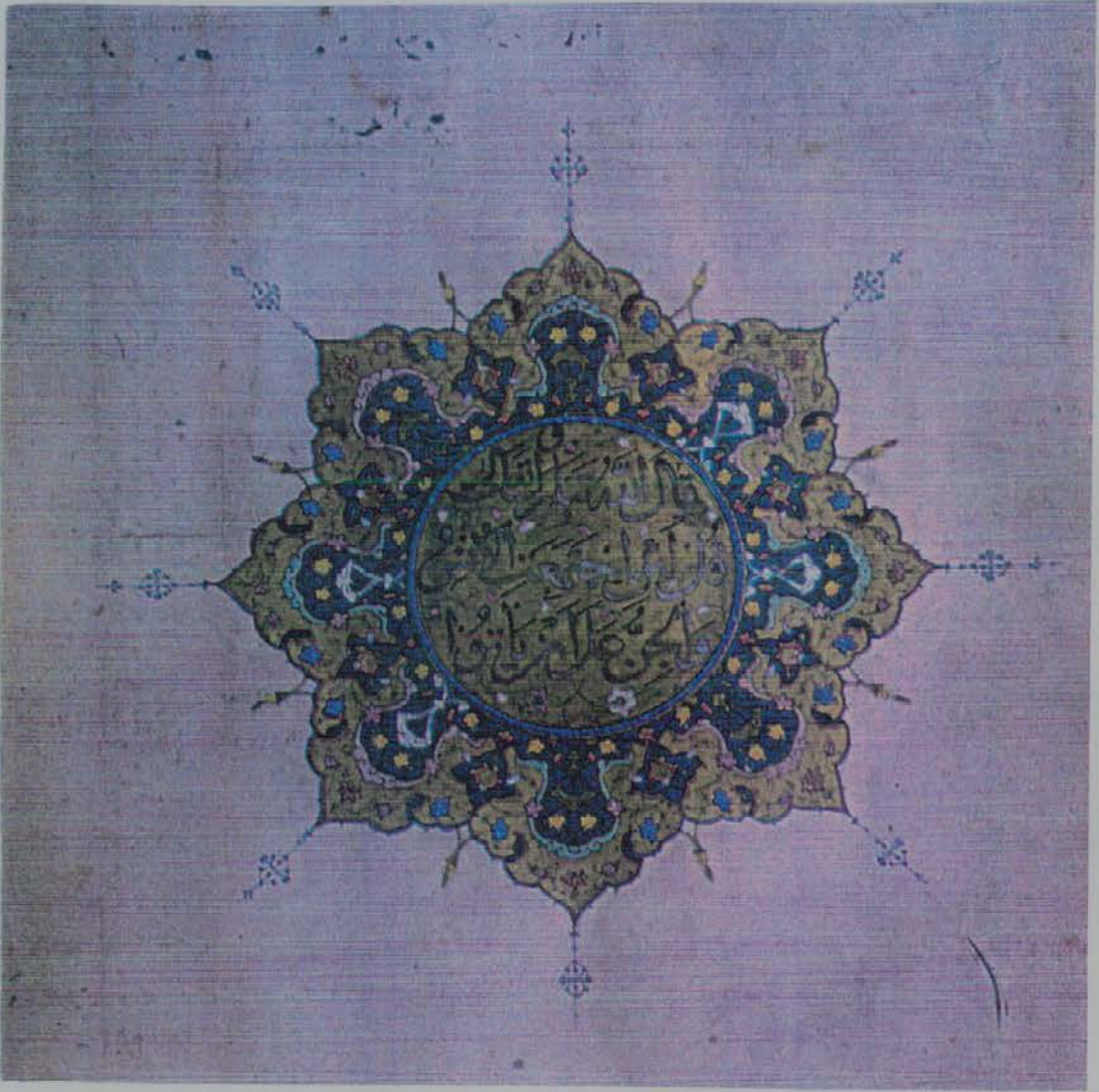
<sup>55</sup> James, *QM*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



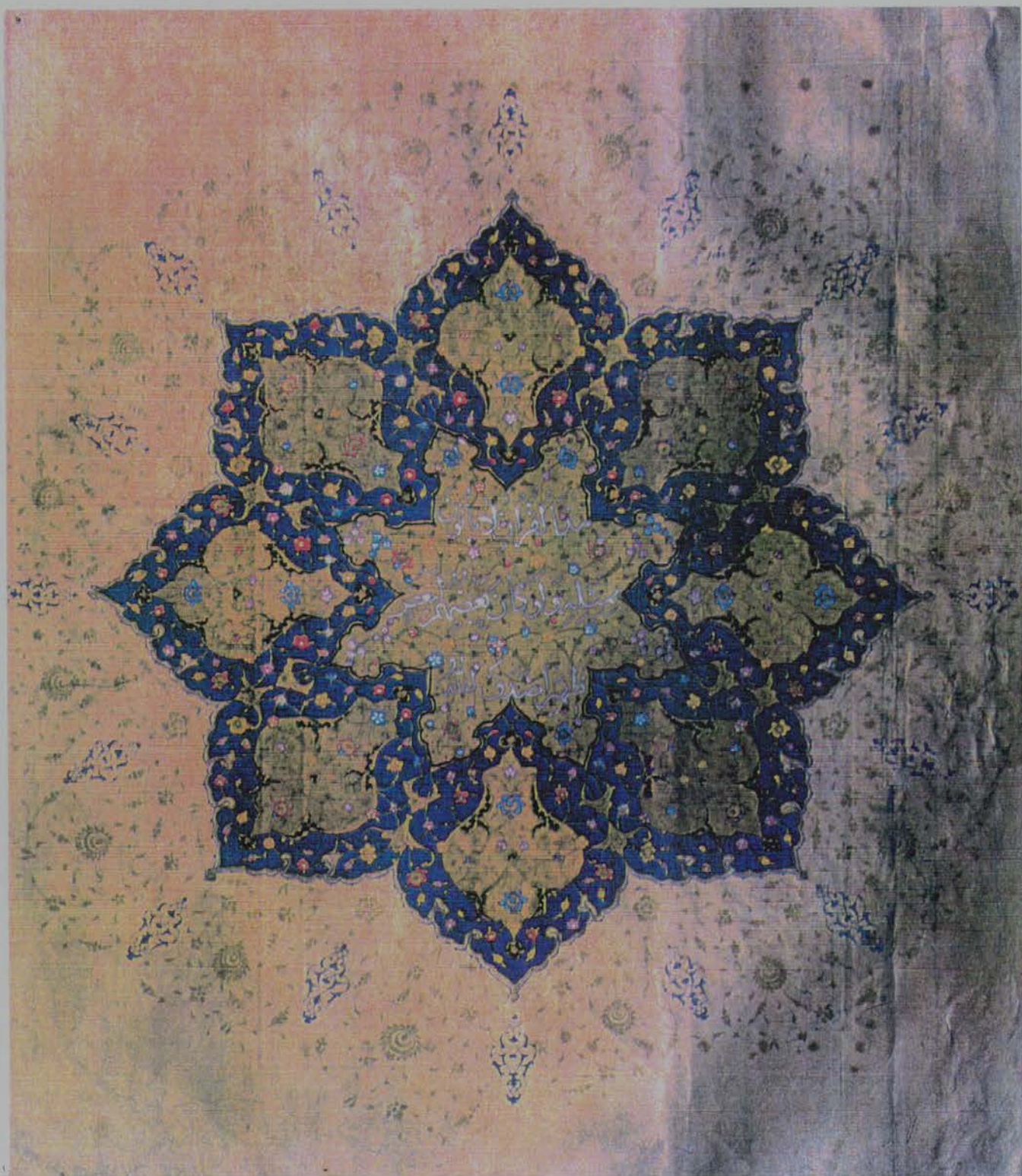
Pl. 10. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).





Pl. 11. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 982-983/1574-5.  
Scribe: Tâqî al-Dîn Muhammad ibn Mutahhar. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).





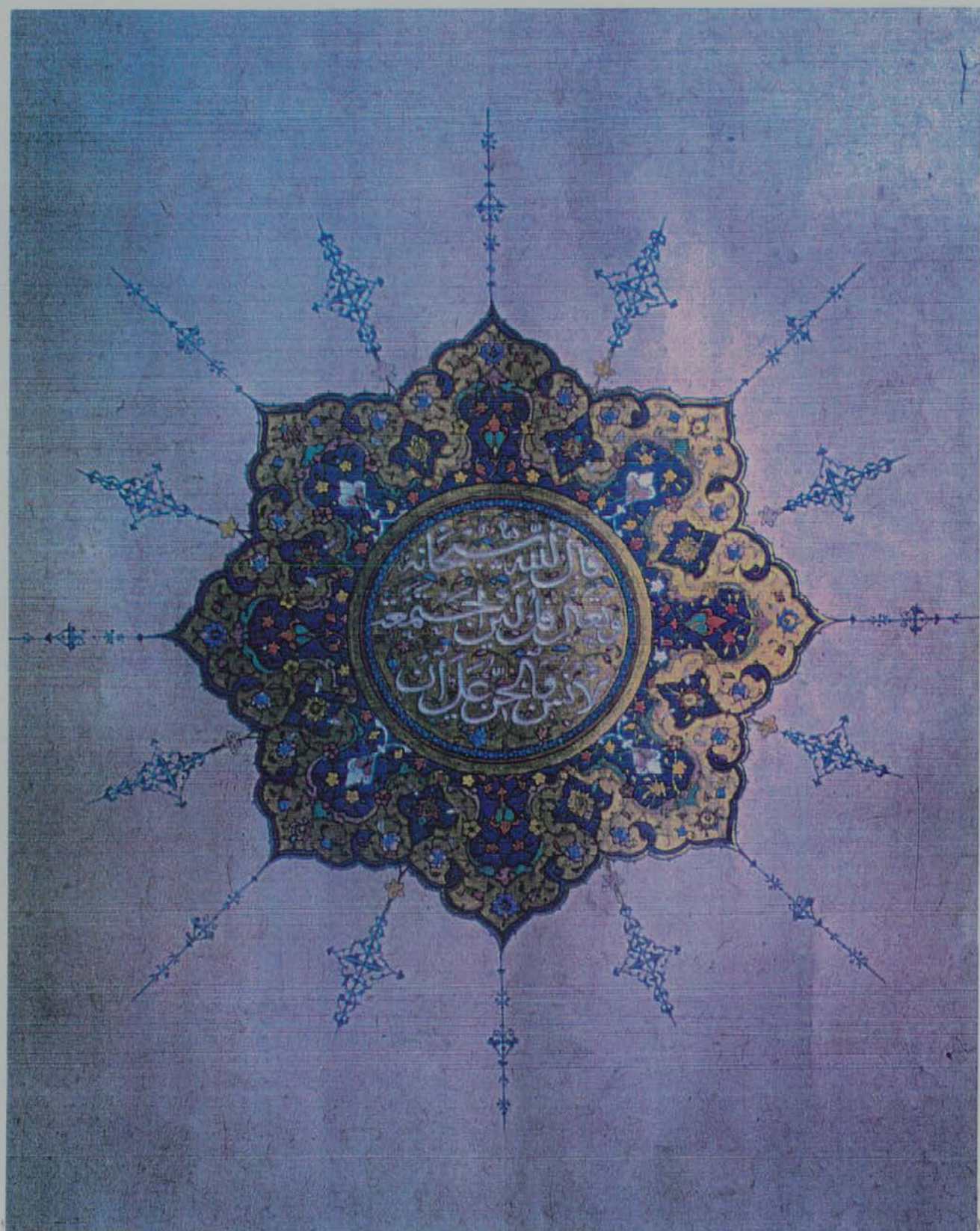
Pl. 12. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 975-976/1567-8.  
Scribe: Nizâm al-Dîn Mahmûd. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).





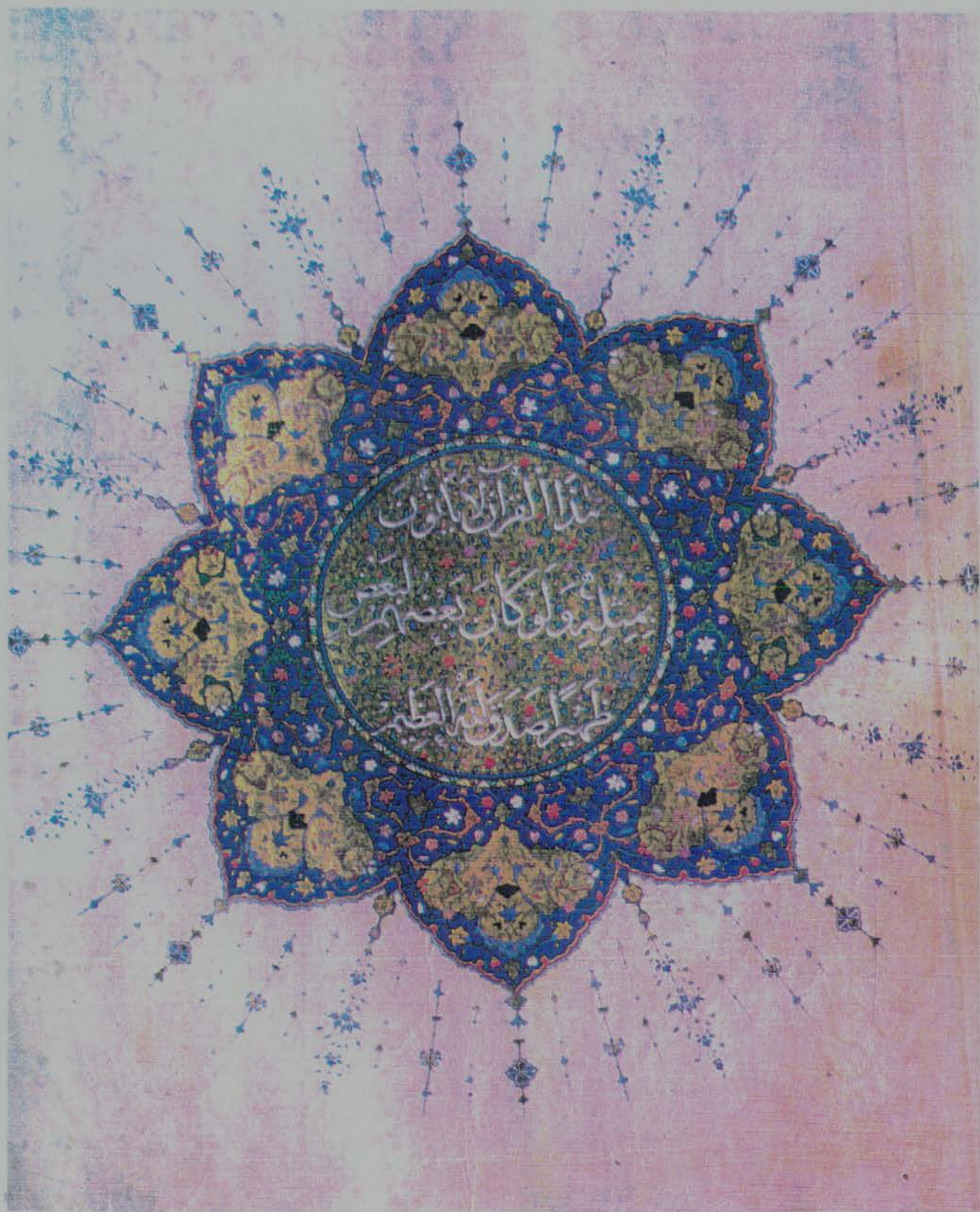
Pl. 13. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163).





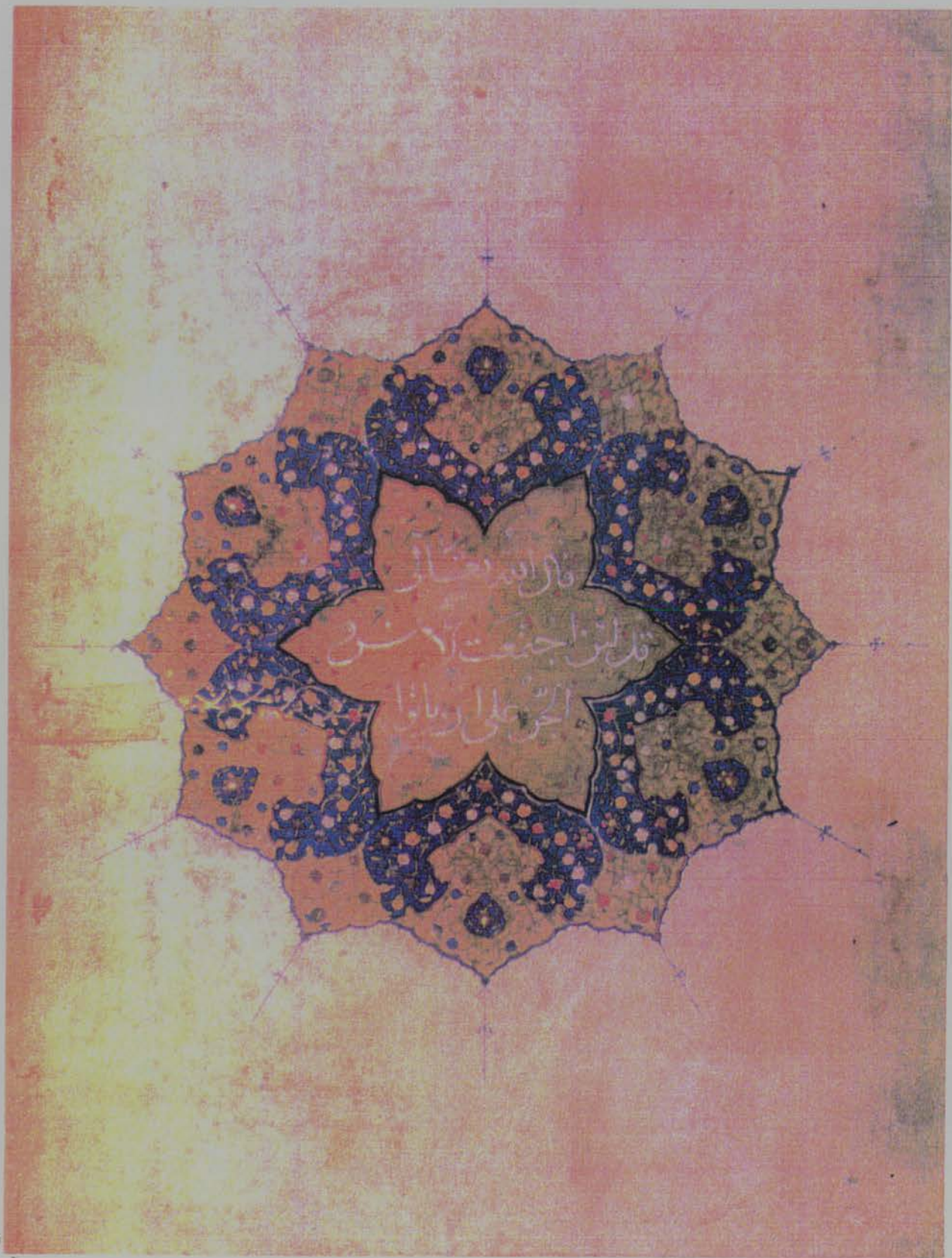
Pl. 14. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Late 16th century A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).





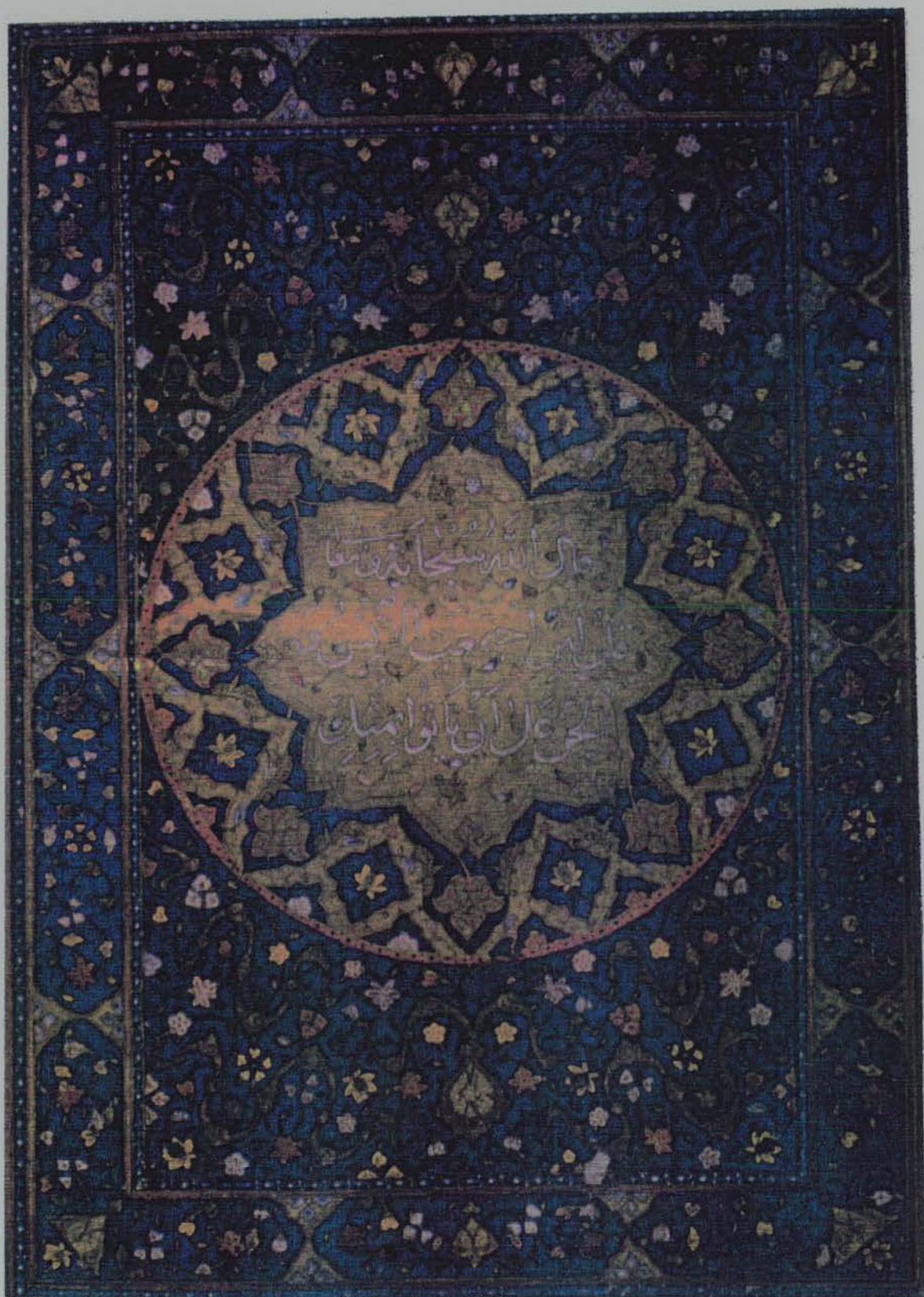
Pl. 15. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. 16th century A.D.  
Scribe: Ruzbihan Muhammad al-Tab<sup>c</sup>i al-Shîrâzî. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).





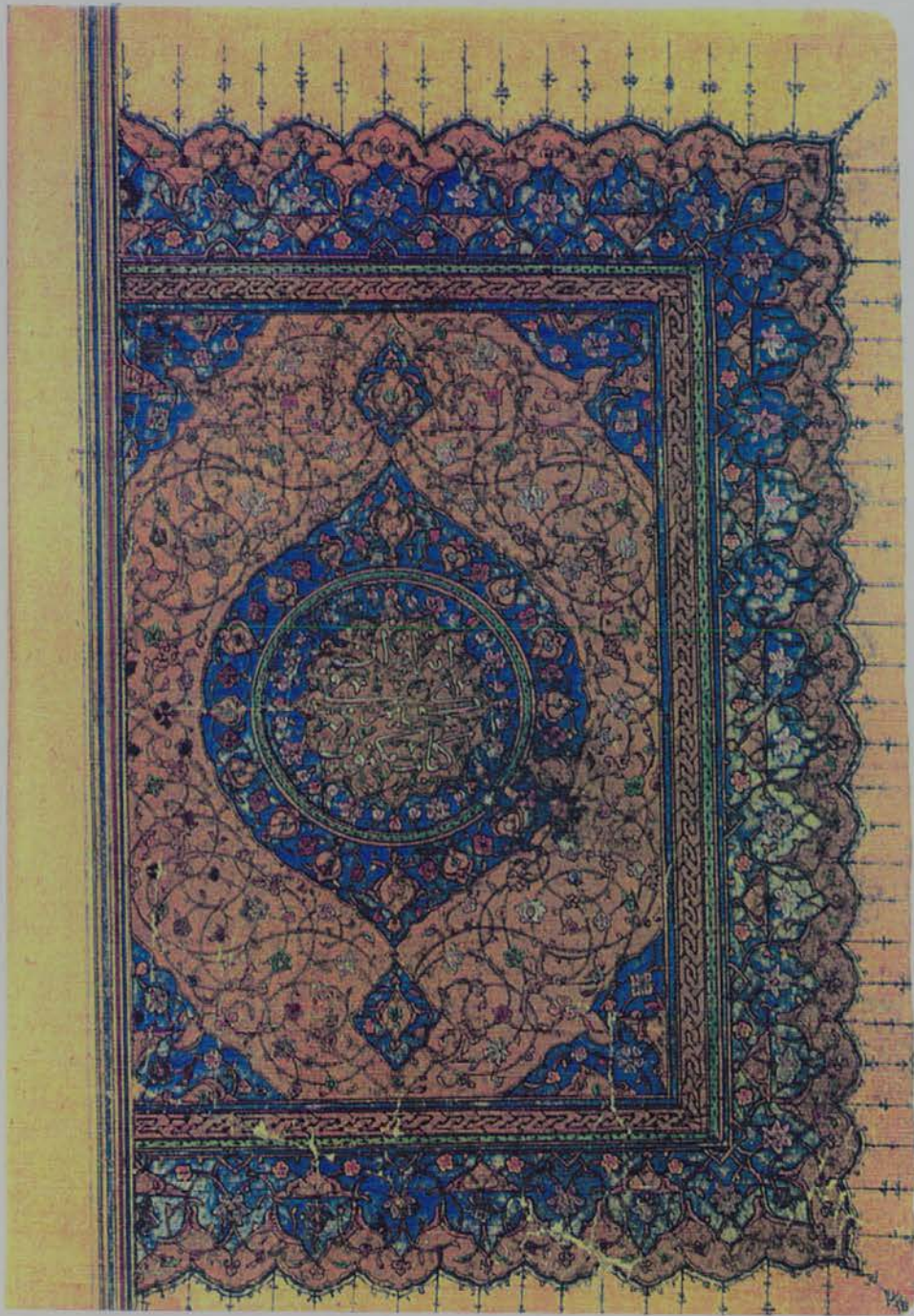
Pl. 16. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. ca. 1525 A.D. JRULM 44(754)





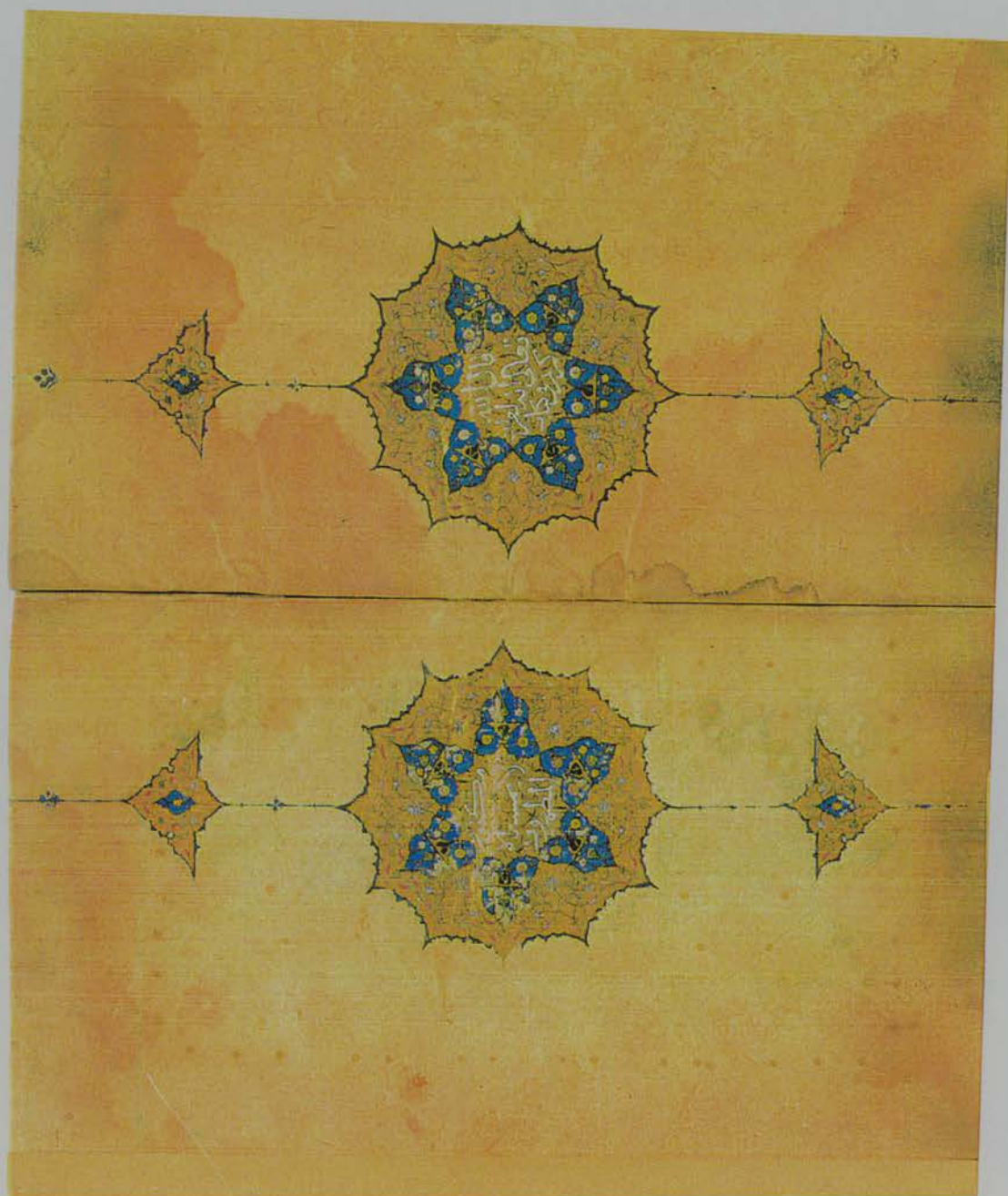
Pl. 17. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. ca. 16th century A.D.  
JRULM 45(797).





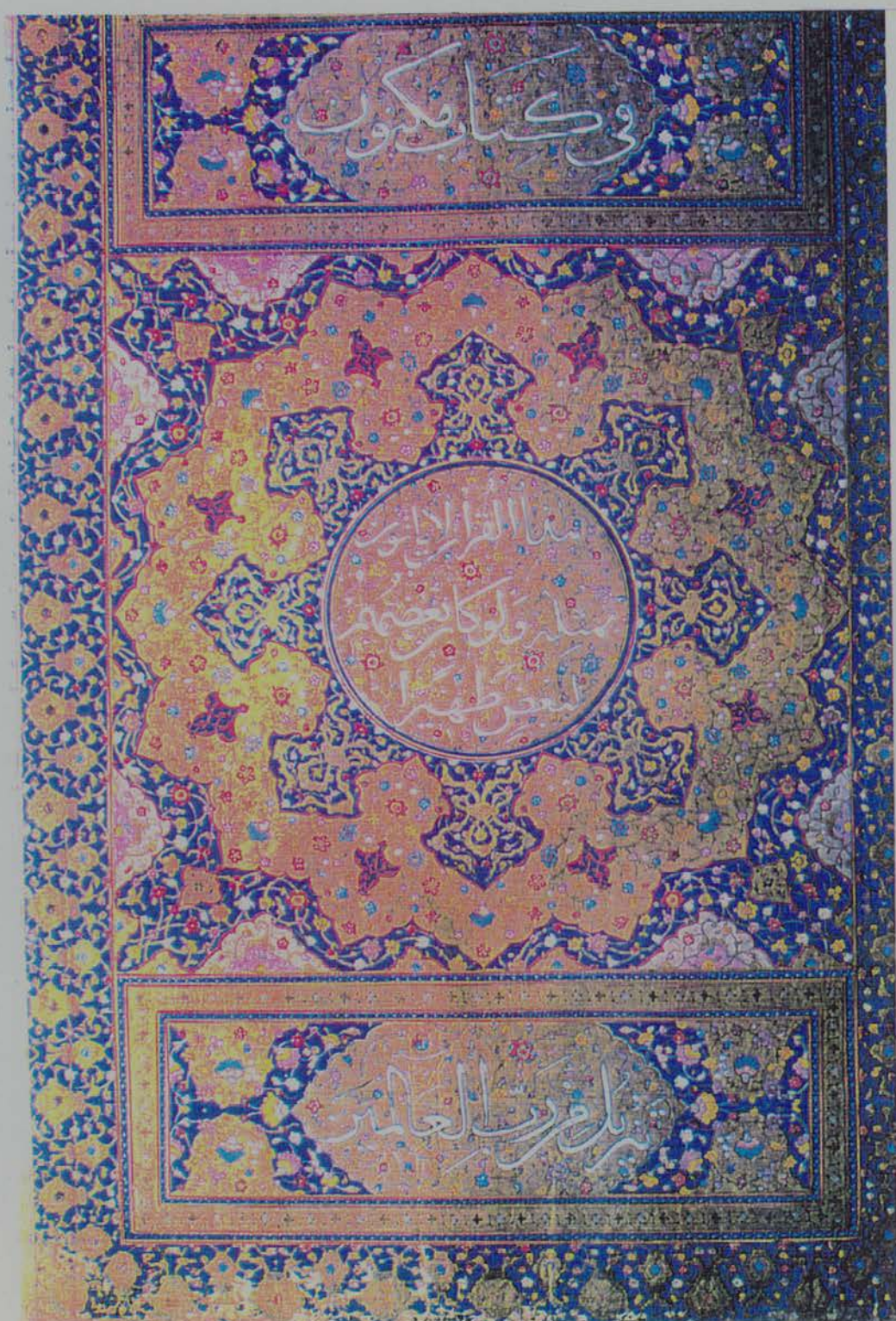
Pl. 18. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Probably Herât, ca 1490-1510  
A.D. Khalili, QUR323.





Pl. 19. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Istanbul ca 1550-1560 A.D.  
Khalili, QUR420.





Pl. 20. Frontispieces from a single-volume Qur'ân. Probably 1550 A.D.  
CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).

## 2.1. The content of the Qur'ânic texts used in Qur'ânic frontispieces

Certain *âyat* are particularly suitable for frontispiece decoration in the Qur'ân.

They are:

a)

"That (this) is indeed a noble Qur'ân  
In a Book kept hidden  
Which none toucheth save the purified,  
A revelation from the Lord of the Worlds."<sup>57</sup>

[*Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah* (56): *Âyat* 77-80].

b)

"Say: Verily, though mankind and the Jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'ân, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one another."<sup>58</sup>

[*Sûrah al-Isrâ'* (17): *Âyah*: 88].

These two *âyat*, 17:88 and 56:77-80, refer directly to the Qur'ân itself. Both deliver the same message but from a different perspective. One declares that the Qur'ân is one, and is from God, and is so sacred that no one can produce anything similar. The other implies that, since the Qur'ân is most sacred, one has to be 'clean' before touching the Qur'ân. Thus they contain a strong and precise message chosen from the Qur'ân itself to act as a reminder to Muslims in general. Of the two (though this is not to say that one is less important than the other), *Sûrah* 17:88 seems more appropriately used in frontispieces than *Sûrah* 56:77-80. On the other hand, *sûrah*

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<sup>57</sup> Pickthall, *Meaning*, 386.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.



56:77-80 is most suitable for the covers of the Qur'ân. In fact, according to James, by tradition, *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was often stamped on the outside of Qur'ân covers,<sup>59</sup> as stated in one of the *âyât*: that "which none toucheth save the purified".

All this suggests some logical steps that relate to the handling of the Qur'ân. The first step is that whoever wants to read or touch the Qur'ân must be 'clean'.<sup>60</sup> The second step is that, after touching the Qur'ân, curiosity may lead a person to read the beautifully inscribed cover itself. This cover is where *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was repeatedly written on the front and back as well as the spine. This *sûrah* acts as a reminder as well as an enhancement of the already known fact that he or she must first be clean. Following this, the first thing that a person sees in an open Qur'ân is the illuminated frontispieces which contained *Sûrah* 17:88, declaring that no one can ever produce anything similar to the Qur'ân. It is most sacred and - as is also frequently stated elsewhere in the Qur'ân — it is a revelation from God. Sometime, one might find both *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 17:88 written in the frontispieces (see Pl. 20).<sup>61</sup> This is merely to lay more emphasis on the message of the Qur'ân. The former quotation is always written in the top and bottom *ḥunwâns*, whereas the latter is in the *shamsah* designs at the centre of the frontispieces. Thus the concept of "outer" and "inner" is expressed in the composition, the outer area being the *ḥunwân* and the inner area the *shamsah*, with the outer area for *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and the inner area for *Sûrah* 17:88. Following this is *Sûrah* 1 (*al-Fâtiḥah*) which is the essence of the whole

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<sup>59</sup> See James, in his chapter on 'Penmanship and Painting in Early Qur'âns', in *QM*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> See Poole, *Art*, 300.

<sup>61</sup> CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).



Qur'ân. To end the Qur'ân, there are also finispieces which contain *Sûrah* 6:115, which states:

"The Word of thy Lord  
Doth finds its fulfillment  
In truth and in justice:  
None can change His Words:  
For He is the one Who  
Heareth and knoweth all."<sup>62</sup>

All this clearly shows a systematic arrangement in designing the external format<sup>63</sup> of the Qur'ân. The artist used *âyât* from the Qur'ân consistently to remind his readers of their responsibilities as Muslims and also to enhance their belief in God and His word. Safavid artists had inherited this tradition from their predecessors and developed it to a peak of perfection in their design. The standardisation of design and colour probably resulted in their works being produced faster while remaining aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, the style developed during the Safavid period continued to be used and propagated for generation after generation.

The epigraphical content of the frontispieces found in Qur'âns before the Safavid period was rather unsystematic in arrangement and in choice of *âyah*. One gets the impression that these *âyât* were chosen at will by the artist concerned. This is not to say that these *âyât* are inappropriate for these frontispieces. There are as many as ten *âyât* taken from the Qur'ân, apart from *Sûrah* 56:77-80 and *Sûrah* 17:88, and these *âyât* have varied emphasis. All refer indirectly to the Qur'ân. The overall subject

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<sup>62</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, 324. See James, *AT*, fig.56.

<sup>63</sup> The phrase "external format" refers to the 'non-text' illuminated folios of the Qur'ân, for example the frontispieces and the finispieces.

matter mostly concentrates on knowledge (*Sûrah* 5:100-101)<sup>64</sup>, seeking God's help and believing in Him alone (*Sûrah* 11:88),<sup>65</sup> and on the unbelievers (*Sûrah* 98:1).<sup>66</sup> All this suggests a long period of experimentation in the use of the Qur'ânic text and in testing the acceptability of given *âyât* for frontispieces. In the period between the 13th and 15th centuries *Sûrah* 56:77-80 appears eight times out of the sixteen samples of frontispieces cited. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 seems to be the most frequently used *sûrah* and continues to be so even today. The reason for this is that *Sûrah* 56:77-80 is widely taught in Islamic religious education and thus is widely known. But *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was less used for the frontispieces of Safavid Qur'âns. The reason for this is not known. Instead, *Sûrah* 17:88 was widely used for these frontispieces. *Sûrah* 17:88 refers to the authenticity of the text, and having it in the frontispieces differentiates the Qur'ân from all other illuminated manuscripts. Thus *Sûrah* 17:88 acts as a testimony for the sacred book. During the Safavid period, illuminated secular manuscripts were produced with an equally high level of perfection to that found in Qur'âns. In some instances, their format resembles that of the Qur'ân itself. Comparable example can be seen in the *Bustân* of Sa<sup>c</sup>di, copied by Mohammad-Qâsem son of Shâdishâh. The Illuminated opening was attributed to Shaykhzâde, probably from Herât and datable ca. 1528 A.D.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See James, *QM*, fig. 22.

<sup>65</sup> See James, *MS*, fig. 17.

<sup>66</sup> See James, *QM*, fig. 29.

<sup>67</sup> See Soudavar, *Art*, pp. 194-195, pl. 74.

### 3. The design of inscribed *shamsahs*

*Shamsah* in Arabic simply means the sun.<sup>68</sup> Thus *shamsah* design symbolises at the simplest level the concept of light. In Persian, this *shamsah* design is also known as *debacha*, which means among other things an elaborate sunburst medallion design.<sup>69</sup> Safavid Qur'âns had at least two types of inscribed *shamsah*. The first type consists of a single *shamsah* design with a written *âyah* placed at the centre of the page. The second type is the *shamsah* in a carpet-page design. In other words, in the latter case the *shamsah* is fully enclosed by decoration.

*Sûrah* 42:52 states that "We have made the (Qur'an) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will",<sup>70</sup> and this could well be the answer to the invention of the concept of illuminated *shamsahs* in frontispieces. In a Qur'ânic content the symbol of the *shamsah* is generally equated with the concept of the divine light. This concept of 'light' can be seen from two angles. First, the text itself deals with the concept of 'light'. "Again and again the Qur'ân refers to itself as light";<sup>71</sup> for example, the word 'light' can be found in *Sûrah* 4:174, *Sûrah* 6:122, *Sûrah* 7:157 and also elsewhere in the Qur'ân.<sup>72</sup> And of course there is a specific *sûrah* in the Qur'ân called *Sûrah al-Nûr* (Light) 24:1-64.<sup>73</sup> These *âyât* drive repeated messages to

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<sup>68</sup> See Lings, *QACI*, pp. 71-78.

<sup>69</sup> See Atil, "*Illuminated Manuscripts*", 26. Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, 380.

<sup>70</sup> Yusuf Ali, *HQ*, pp. 1321-22.

<sup>71</sup> See Lings, *QACI*, 74.

<sup>72</sup> According to S. Asyarie and R. Yusuf, in their book books entitled *Indeks al-Qur'ân*, there are 43 direct *âyât* and 5 indirect *âyât* that deal 'light', and one *Sûrah al-Nûr* (24:1-64). See S. Asyarie and R Yusuf, *Indeks al-Qur'ân* (Bandung, 1984).

<sup>73</sup> This *sûrah* can be interpreted as concerning the highest virtues of mankind in the

Muslims in the form of metaphors about the concept and meaning of 'light'. Thus it is not surprising that artists feel compelled to interpret or translate these *âyat* into visual form to express the symbolic concept of 'light' in the Qur'ân.

As it happens, none of the *âyat* from *Sûrah al-Nûr* (Light), or for that matter any *âyah* from elsewhere in the Qur'ân which deals with light, was written in this *shamsah* design in the frontispiece. Most of the *âyat* used are from either *Sûrah* 17:88 or *Sûrah* 56:77-80. Therefore there is no connection between the text and the *shamsah* design. If this is the case, perhaps the term *shamsah* for such designs is not entirely suitable. On the other hand, close examination of this design and comparisons with other forms of art suggest otherwise. This radiated symbol can rightly be called *shamsah*, for on its own it carries the abstract or symbolic meaning of light. Thus, there are two aspects of meaning in this inscribed symbol. The first aspect is the direct meaning of the *âyah*, while the second aspect has to do with an indirect or symbolic meaning of the *shamsah*. The *âyah* at the centre thus actually enhances the symbolism of the *shamsah*. Both *âyah* and the symbol complement each other, but of course without challenging the supremacy of the *âyah*.

In terms of composition, the *shamsah* symbol was always depicted with a vast empty space surrounding it, thus creating a strong impact of its presence at the centre of the page. According to Mircea Eliade, the concept of centre has a religious as well as ritual significance in most civilisations.<sup>74</sup> To Esin Atil, the illumination symbolises the universe.<sup>75</sup> This symbol of the centre has a psychological effect that provokes and

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eyes of God.

<sup>74</sup> See M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, tr. P. Mairet (London, 1952), pp. 51-56.

<sup>75</sup> See Atil, "Illuminated Manuscripts", 26.



expresses emotions as well as spiritual experiences.<sup>76</sup> There is no hard division between the empty space and the *shamsah* design. In between these two areas, there are always fine ray-like lines, finials or floral lines to soften the demarcation between painted and non-painted areas (see Pl. 12).<sup>77</sup> The painted areas blend smoothly with the unpainted areas, thus symbolising the concept of the *shamsah* whose light diffuses into the atmosphere. The enormous empty space forces the eye to focus on the *shamsah*, but simultaneously the eye falls back into the empty space by means of the ray-like or floral lines surrounding the *shamsah*. This method is again applied within the richly-coloured *shamsah* design itself. The text at the centre of the *shamsah* is always written in white, overlapping the colourful fine floral background.<sup>78</sup> Gold is always used for the background at the centre of the inscribed area. The white script within the central circle corresponds beautifully with the enormous white space outside the *shamsah*. The strength of the white script also gives the impression that it is above the *shamsah* design, thus indirectly emphasising the supremacy of the text. A similar *shamsah* or *debacha* design can be seen in the *ḏīwān* of Amir Khusraw Dihlāwī copied in Shīrāz and dated 834/1430-1431 (see Pl. 21),<sup>79</sup> and in the *diwan* of Qasim dated 863/1458-59 (see Pl. 22).<sup>80</sup> Here the internal scripts are written in

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<sup>76</sup> See J. Hjärpe, 'The Symbol of the Centre and its Religious Function in Islam', in *Religious Symbols and their Functions: Based on Papers read at the Symposium on Religious Symbols and their Functions held at Åbo on the 28th-30th of August 1978*, ed. by H. Biezais (Stockholm, 1979), pp. 30-40.

<sup>77</sup> See CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

<sup>78</sup> See CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156) and CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).

<sup>79</sup> See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, cat. no. 18.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, cat. no. 139.

yellow and not in white, while the *shamsah* designs are predominantly painted in dark blue with a little red, white and pastel colours.

The development of this inscribed *shamsah* design can be traced back at least to the 14th century, as in a Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library. This particular Qur'ân shows that the earlier design was much more rigid in its composition (see Pl. 6).<sup>81</sup> The *shamsah* design is geometrically depicted, with twelve small circles surrounding a bigger circle at the centre. Within this bigger circle is a small circle. The space between these two circles at the centre is where *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was written. Within the small circle at the centre there is only floral design. Gradually, this design changed from a hard-edged geometric shape into a somewhat circular *shamsah* but with an internal floral design (see Pl. 10).<sup>82</sup> Later, by the beginning of the Safavid era, this design developed into a fully organic floral-type *shamsah* (see Pl. 15).<sup>83</sup> This *shamsah* design is like a blooming flower with multiple layers of overlapping petals<sup>84</sup> (See Pl. 22). Thus, this *shamsah* design remains the hallmark of Safavid Qur'âns.

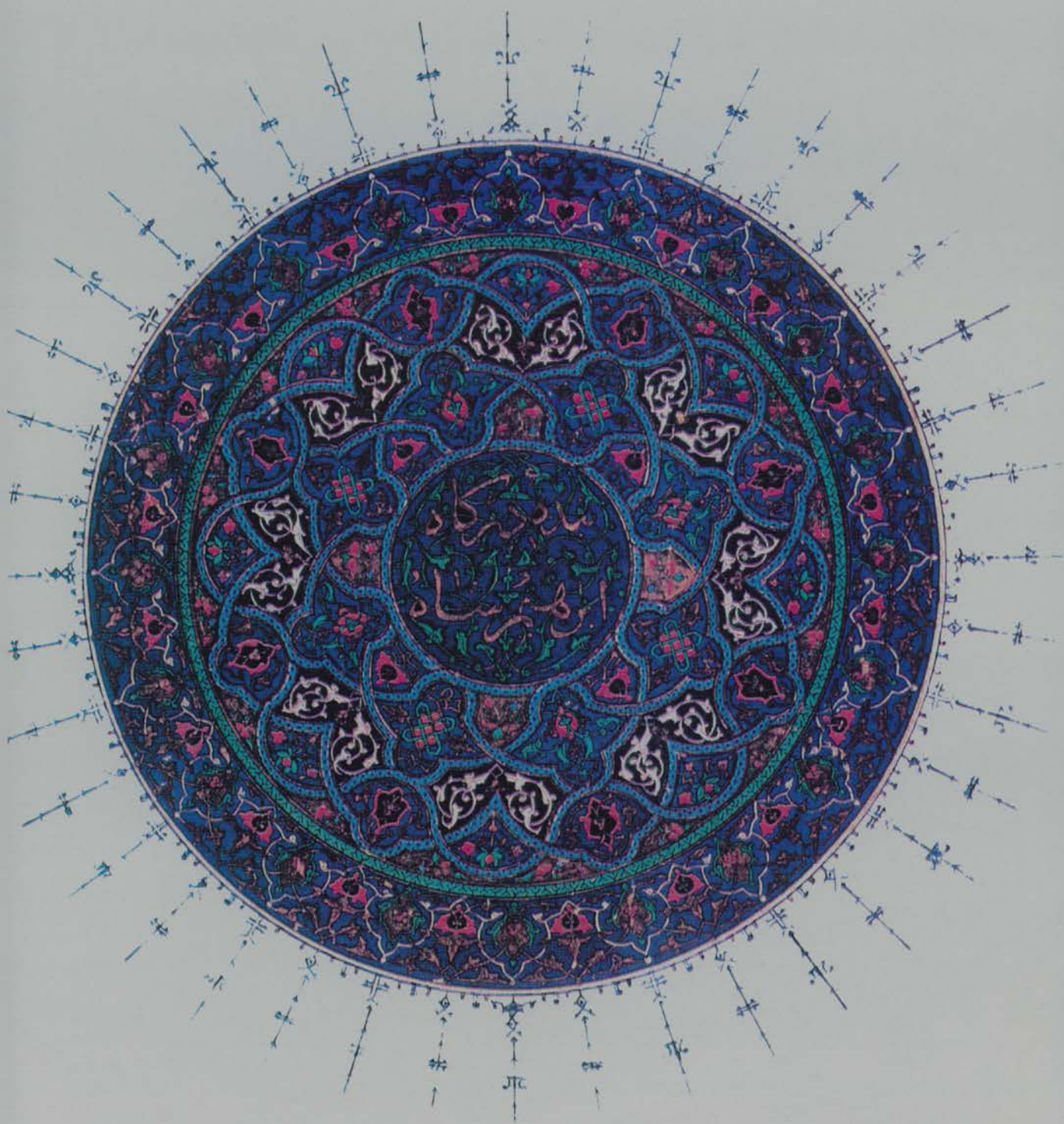
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<sup>81</sup> See CBL Ms. 1470 (Arberry no. 137). See James, *QM*, fig. 123a, b & c.

<sup>82</sup> See CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).

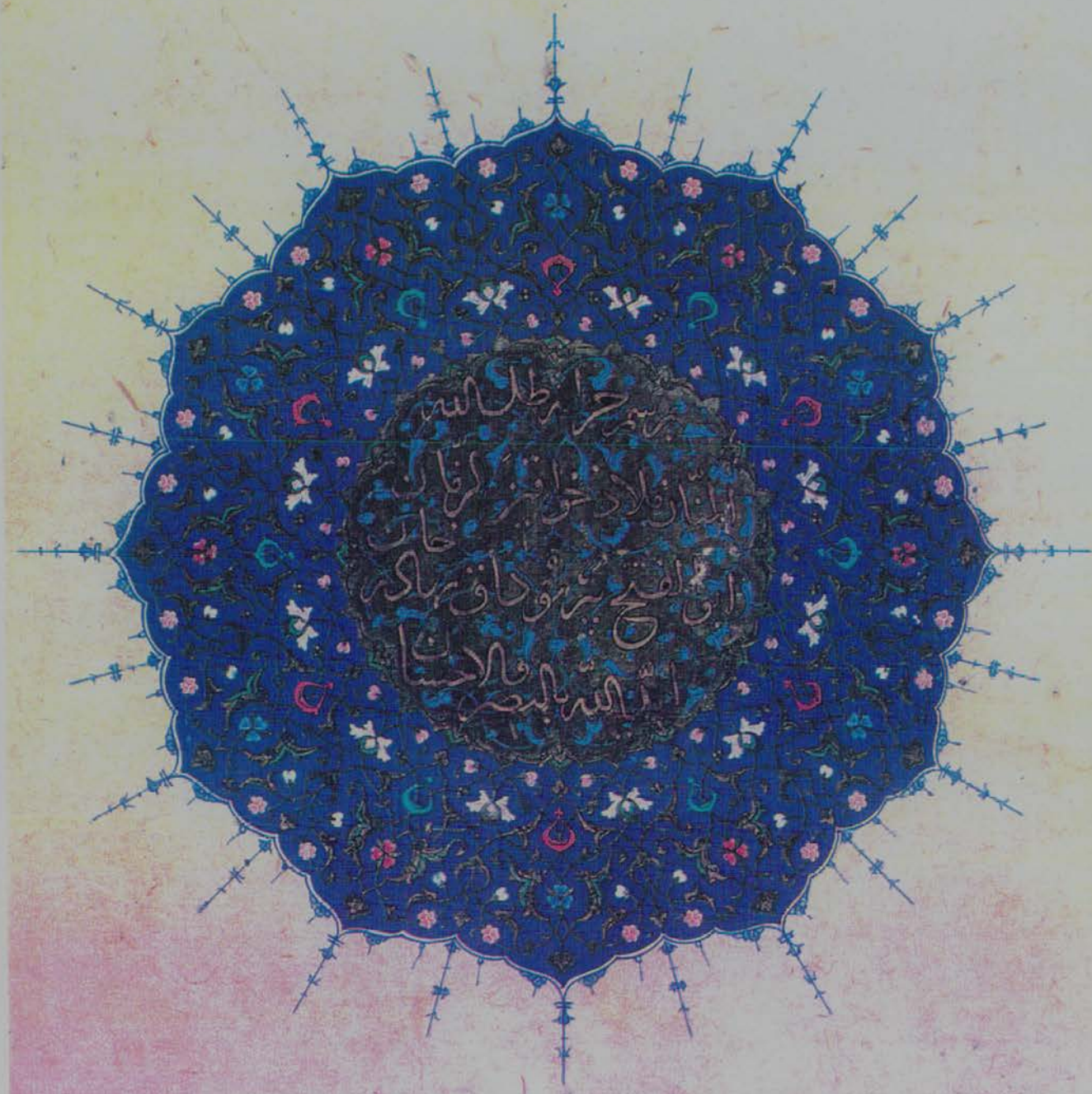
<sup>83</sup> See CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156).

<sup>84</sup> See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, cat. no. 139.



Pl. 21. *Debacha* from a *Dîwân* of Amir Khusraw Dihlâwî.  
Shîrâz, dated 834/1430-31.





Pl. 22. *Debacha* from a *Dîwân* of Qâsim. Iran, dated 863/1458-9.



## The flower type of *shamsah*

At least two groups of flower-type *shamsah* design can be identified in Safavid Qur'âns. The *shamsah* design found in the Qur'ân copied by Tâqî al-Dîn Muhammad ibn Muṭahhar<sup>85</sup> dated 982-3/1574-5 (see Pl. 11) is quite similar to that in an unsigned late 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library (see Pl. 14).<sup>86</sup> These two Qur'âns could well be from the same centre and even by the same hand. The designs of these Qur'âns are more or less identical, except for the Qur'ân of Tâqî al-Dîn Muḥammad, which is rather less elaborate than the other. Both have a more or less equal amount of gold and colours, but their structure plan is slightly different — for example, Ms. 1548 has more lines defining the central roundel. One distinct feature in terms of structure is to be found at the outer frame of the *shamsah* in Ms. 1548. It recalls the Chinese cloud-collar design found in Iranian costume (see Pl. 23).<sup>87</sup> One can easily differentiate the flower-type *shamsah* from the type found in Mss. 1534 and 1548 of Ruzbihan Muhammad al-Tab<sup>c</sup>î al-Shîrâzî (see Pl. 15).<sup>88</sup> Ruzbihan's flower shape relies not on a very few pronounced lobes for its external outline, but on a continuous rippling wavy line, while the field of the flower design has much more intricate detail than can be found in Mss. 1534 and 1548. The white cursive script within the *shamsah* in both Ruzbihan's Qur'ân (Ms. 1558) and in Ms. 1548, however, seems to come from the same school. This can be detected by the two letters '*qaf*' and '*lam*', which both have the same flow and grace. Ms. 1534 has far less

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<sup>85</sup> See CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).

<sup>86</sup> See CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164).

<sup>87</sup> See Lentz and Lowry, *Timur*, cat. no. 116.

<sup>88</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156). See James, *QB*, pl. 58.

pronounced ray-like or finial lines; this features is much further developed in Mss. 1548 and 1558. Also, there are only three inner circular lines which house the *âyah* in Ms. 1534 while Ms. 1548 has four. Less colours were used in the composition of the *shamsah* in Ms. 1534, which uses only gold and blue, while Ms. 1548 uses a broad band of gold for the main circle around the roundel shades circles and some of blue as well as red. This suggests that Ms. 1548 is more costly than Ms. 1534.

Another group of *shamsah* designs can be considered as typical of the Shîrâz school. One good example is in the Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan (Ms. 1558). At least one Qur'ân datable ca. 1550 A.D., in Iran, now in the Sackler collection in Washington,<sup>89</sup> can be taken as a comparison point (see Pl. 24). The *shamsah* design of Pl. 24 seems to be from the Ruzbihan school. Except for the finial lines and the circular frames for the *âyah* at the centre, the other details are almost identical to CBL Ms. 1558. The design of ca. 1550 is different from the earlier ones (Mss. 1534 and 1548) in terms of its shape. It is more of a floral than a cloud-collar type of design. Both Ms. 1548 and ca. 1550 Qur'ân in Washington have a similar internal round design for the *âyah* but they differ in terms of the decoration behind the writing. More blue was used in the design of the Washington Qur'ân. Ruzbihan's style is the most detailed and richly decorated of all (Ms. 1558). Areas that attract special attention in this particular *shamsah* are the background for the *âyât* as well as the extra geometric design within the narrow circular framing band. One distinct feature in Ruzbihan's design is the use of well-distributed minute floral motifs. These floral motifs are red, flashing so to speak against the gold background. More Chinese cloud motifs are depicted here than in the Qur'ân of Tâqî' al-Dîn Muhammad, and they are in many colours — red, green and light blue. The finial lines sprout much more in this floral

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<sup>89</sup> See G. D. Lowry with S. Nemazee, *A Jeweler's Eye: Islamic Arts of the Book from the Vever Collection* (Seattle and London, 1988), pl.2.

type of *shamsah* and very subtly merge into the background of the page. This scheme can also be seen in the Qur'ân copied for the sovereign by Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd, who lived during the time of Shâh Tahmâsp (see Pl. 12).

On the other hand, it is interesting to note that even though Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd's Qur'ân has the same flower-type *shamsah*, the internal design is slightly different from Ms. 1558. The central design for the *âyah* is not a circular shape as in the Qur'ân of Ruzbihan but has a design more like a flower. This central flower-type design can also be found in the *shamsah* of a Qur'ân in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, probably copied ca. 1525 A.D. (see Pl. 16).<sup>90</sup> Unfortunately, the artist is not known. The design is almost identical to that of a Turkish Qur'ân copied by Ibrâhîm ibn Dervish al-Bukhârî dated 959/1552 (see Pl. 25).<sup>91</sup> The only difference is in the style of writing which is more Arabic than Persian, in that it has the standard three teeth for the letter '*sîn*' whereas in the Persian these teeth are removed<sup>92</sup> to form one long slanting line for this letter. Comparable examples can be seen in the *shamsah* of the Sa<sup>c</sup>dî *Bustân* (see Pl. 26).<sup>93</sup> According to Soudavar, this manuscript was possibly copied by <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Rahîm al-Khwârazmî for Sultân Khalîl, probably from Tabrîz and datable ca. 1478 A.D. The central flower-shaped design for the *âyah* in the *shamsah* of Pl. 26 is of a similar style to that of Ms. 1544. Even within each petal, the gold 'pelvic bone' design in Pl. 26 is much slimmer than that of Ruzbihan (Ms. 1558).

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<sup>90</sup> JRULM 44[754].

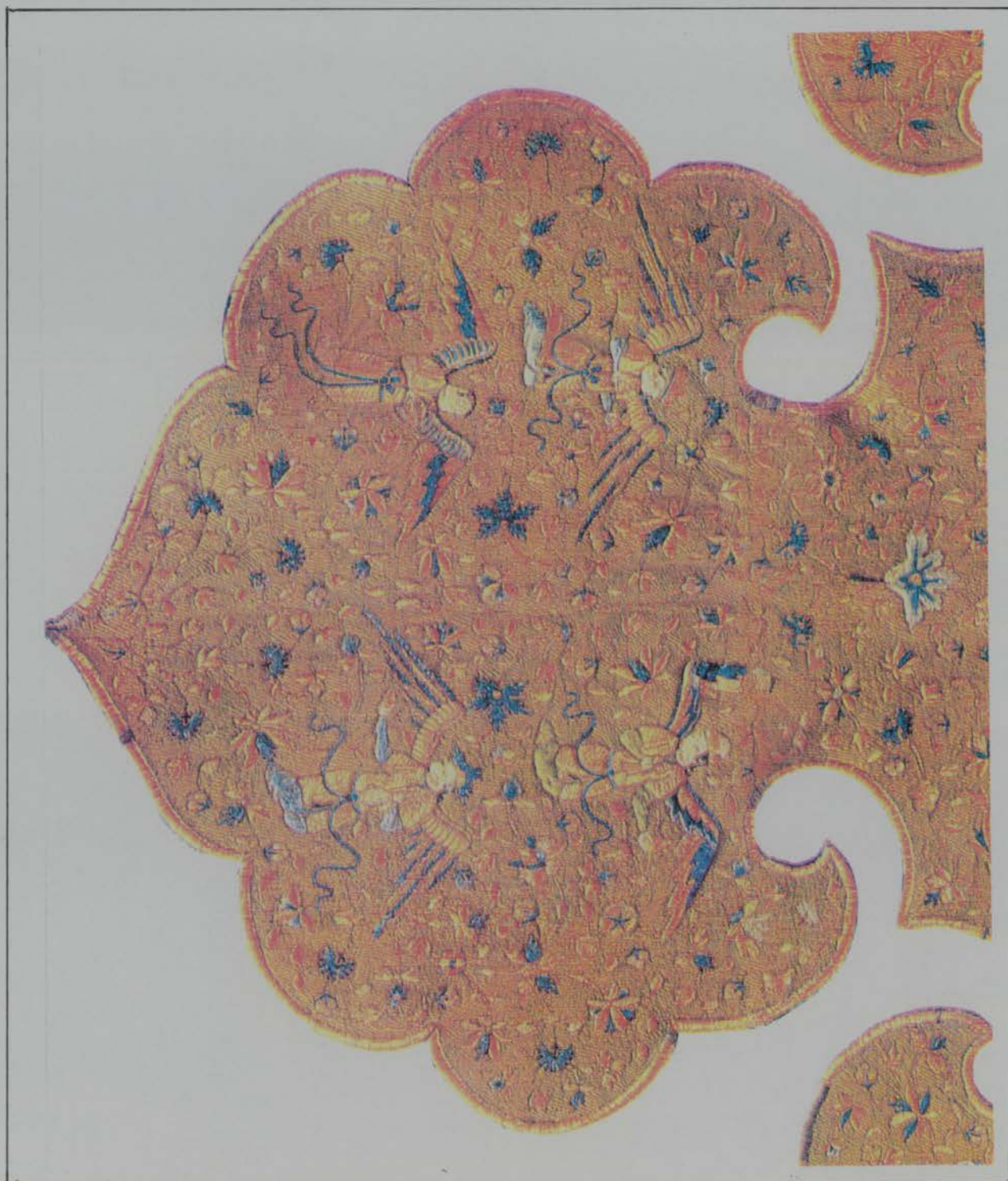
<sup>91</sup> See Ersoy, *Türk*, pl. 14.

<sup>92</sup> I am indebted to my friend al-Ustaz Md. Som b. Sugimon (a lecturer in the International Islamic University- Malaysia) for pointing out this difference. According to him, the style of a slanting elongated *sîn* is more Persian than Arab.

<sup>93</sup> See Soudavar, *Art*, pl. 48.

There is no Chinese cloud motif (executed in light blue in Ms. 1558) and black leaves outline the pelvic bone design. These are some of the subtle differences in *shamsah* design that co-existed in the Safavid period.





Pl. 23. Cloud- collar design. Iran, ca. 1400-1450 A.D.





Pl. 24. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Iran, ca. 1550 A.D.  
Formely Vever Collection. s86.0082, s86.0083.

## The circular *shamsah*

Lastly, one prominent feature is the circular *shamsah* with finials around it. There are two types of circular *shamsah*. The first type can be identified by the internal area reserved for the *âyah*. This area was made out of overlapping square structures which formed a rounded eight-pointed star. In a way it can be seen as a flower-type internal structure. Surrounding this eight-pointed star are small lotus flowers arranged alternately in red and yellow. The two major colours used in this *shamsah* are blue and gold. An example of this type can be found in the Chester Beatty Qur'ân dated ca. 1550 A.D. from Shîrâz (see Pl. 10).<sup>94</sup> The artist is not known.

The second type can be identified by the internal circular shaped design of the *shamsah* that house the *âyah*. Other areas are more or less the same as in the earlier example. An example of this can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library (see Pl. 13).<sup>95</sup> One important feature in this Qur'ân is that there are pricked marks well distributed in the background of this inscribed area. This technique gave extra glitter to the gold background of the *âyah*. A comparable example can be seen in the uninscribed *shamsah* of a Samarqand Qur'ân dated 994/1585-86 (see Pl. 27). This Qur'ân was copied by "cAbd al-Faqîr al-Râjî al-Rahmatullâh al-Bârî" (the poor slave, the one who hopes for the mercy of God the Creator).<sup>96</sup> There is a slight difference here in its internal circular design.

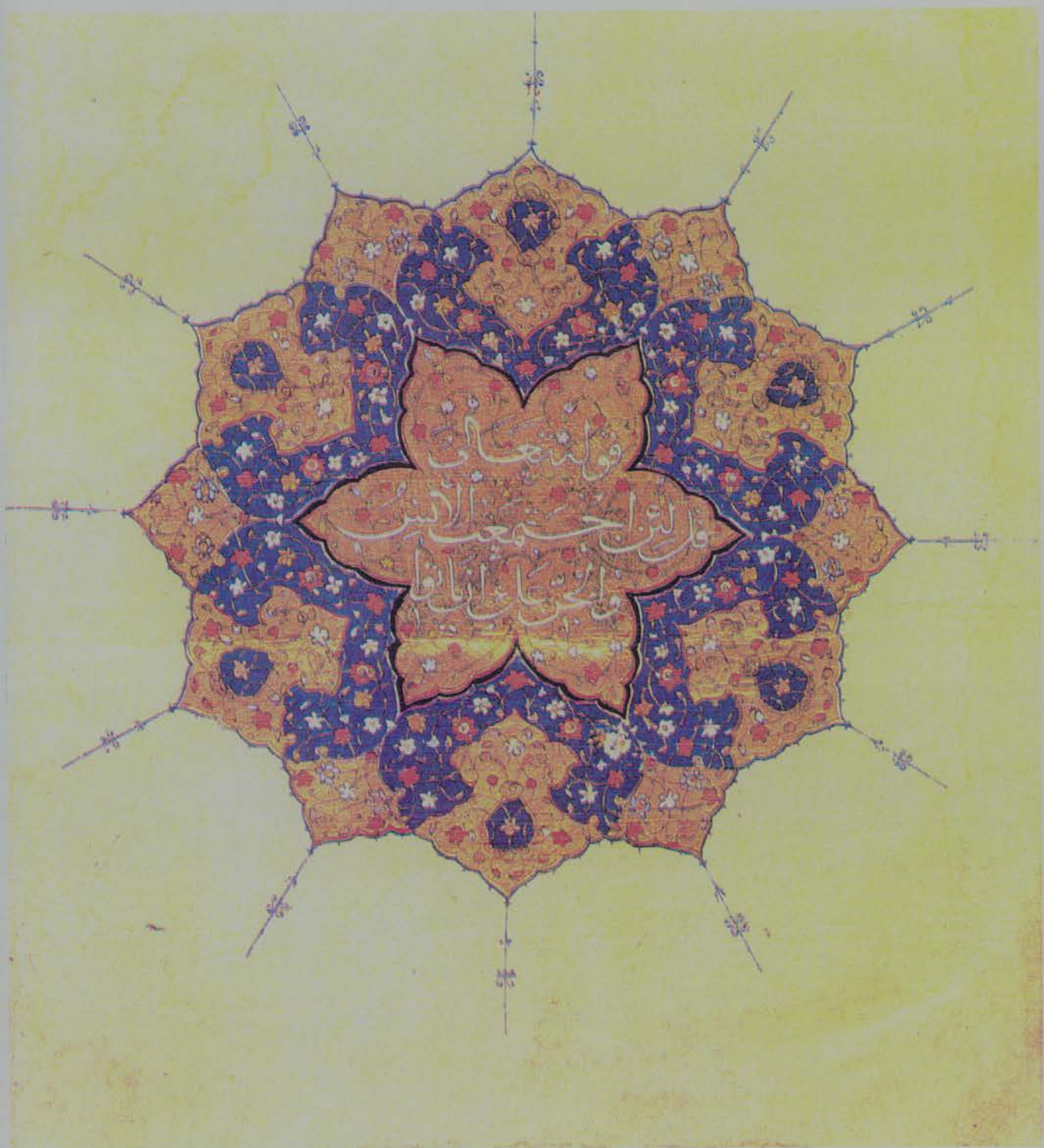
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<sup>94</sup> CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).

<sup>95</sup> See CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163).

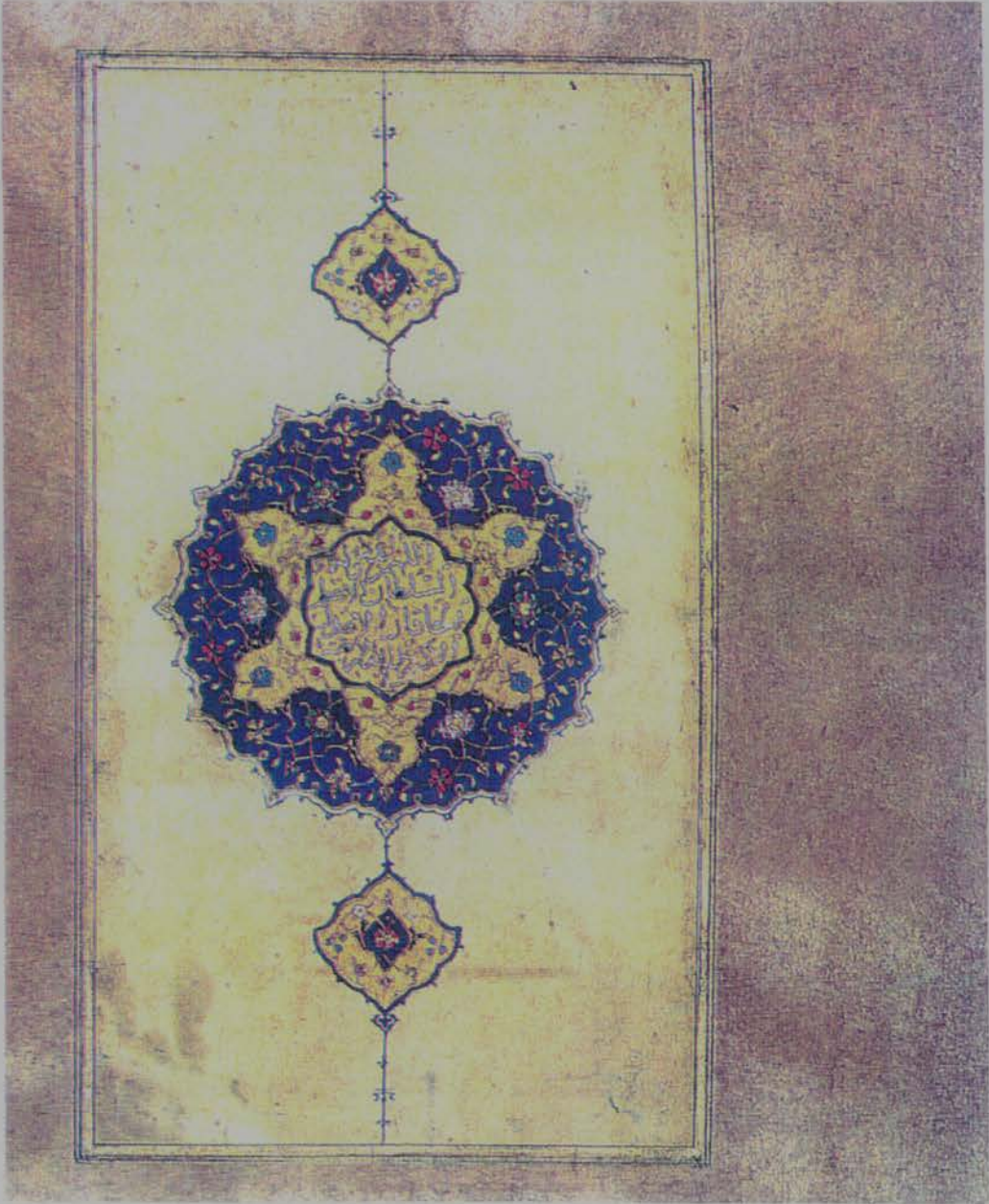
<sup>96</sup> See S. C. Welch, in "The Fâlnâme of Shâh Tahmâsp", in *Treasures of Islam* (New Jersey, 1985), pl.78.





Pl. 25. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Turkey, dated 959/1552.





Pl. 26. *Shamsah* design from the *Bustân* of Sa<sup>c</sup>dî. Possibly copied by <sup>c</sup>Abd al Rahmân al-Khwarazmi, for Sultân Khalili. Probably from Tabrîz, datable ca. 1478 A.D.





Pl. 27. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân. Uzbekistan, Samarqand, dated 994/1585-86.

## The *shamsah* in a carpet page design

A full-page decorated frontispiece of abstract, geometric or floral ornament may be regarded as a 'carpet page'. Structurally, a tripartite<sup>97</sup> concept is normally used in this carpet page. The page is divided into three converging vertical rectangular formats. The outer frame is the unpainted area of the paper, followed by the second thin floral frame, and finally the innermost vertical rectangular format. Within this innermost rectangular format, a further division using the tripartite concept can be found. Such designs can also be divided horizontally into three main areas. The top and bottom comprises horizontal panels for the *âyah*. Usually a *shamsah* is placed in the central square area and inscribed with an *âyah*. The colours are predominantly gold and blue, with some well-distributed colours such as red, yellow, light blue, purple and white. Other details conform to those of the standard *shamsah* design page. This tripartite concept is a popular convention in the tradition of Islamic book. An example of this can be seen in the Chester Beatty Qur'ân datable ca. 1550 A.D. (see Pl. 20).<sup>98</sup> The artist is not known. Another example of a *shamsah* carpet page frontispiece is in 16th-century Qur'ân in the John Rylands Library (see Pl. 17).<sup>99</sup> The former follows the style of a flower-type *shamsah* carpet page. The latter is in the style of a circular type *shamsah* carpet page. Once again the artist is not known. This carpet page has a *shamsah* that is identical to that of the 16th-century Qur'ân<sup>100</sup> in the Chester Beatty Library discussed earlier (see Pl. 10).

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<sup>97</sup> Atil, "*Illuminated Manuscripts*", 26.

<sup>98</sup> CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry no. 159).

<sup>99</sup> JRULM 45[797].

<sup>100</sup> See CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157).



### 3.1. The design of uninscribed *shamsahs*

The tradition of using symbols in illuminated Qur'âns started probably as early as the 8th century A.D. There are two main areas where symbols are frequently used. The first area deals directly with the text such as the *âyah* marker and the marginal symbols.<sup>101</sup> The second area is in the frontispiece and the *shamsah* page. These pages contain indirect symbols pertaining to the simplified concept or version in the meaning of the Qur'ân. Indeed, it is the artist's humble interpretation and appreciation of the Qur'ân. Symbolism found in both these main areas, evidently suggest that a certain level of tolerance had already existed in the early period of Qur'ânic art of illumination. Most of these symbolism deal with the religious concept of 'light' and the concept of "*Âlam al-Mithâl*" (imaginary world) suggesting the garden of paradise in Heaven.

An 8th-century Qur'ân in the Şan'â' National Museum in Yemen<sup>102</sup> contain fragments of some beautiful pages of *shamsah*, frontispiece and finispiece (see Pls. 28, 29 and 30). Reconstructed drawings of these pages (see Figs. 1, 2 and 3), reflect the high level of artistic sophistication and as a clear document of its time. The reconstructed drawing reveals that this *shamsah* design is without any written text. In terms of composition, this *shamsah* design was created on overlapping hidden structures, the overlapping of two squares, to form an eight pointed shape *shamsah*. Similar pattern is repeated within this eight-pointed *shamsah* to form a smaller version of the *shamsah* design. At the centre is a double lines of circular shape design that housed the plant motifs. There could be other types of plant motifs within this circular

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<sup>101</sup> See Chapters on *Âyah* markers and Marginal designs.

<sup>102</sup> O. Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* (Washington, D.C., 1992), pls.16 & 17.



shape design, but due to the condition of the *shamsah* page, no other motifs could be made visible for this reconstructed drawing. There is a strong possibility that there is a "flowing water"<sup>103</sup> or a stream depicted at the base of the tree trunks within the circular shape. But as to how this stream looks like is not known. There are also overlapping tree trunks drawn in between the structure of the eight points *shamsah* design. These eight tree trunks were drawn from the circular shape, overlapping or weaving through the two structure of the *shamsah* design and out into the blank space of the page. A much smaller and simplified version of the plant motifs were also drawn within the smaller shape *shamsah* or in between these tree trunks. In between the two structure of the eight pointed *shamsah* is a bend of arabesque design. The artist had used multiple view point techniques in this *shamsah* design: — aerial and frontal view point. The depiction of the eight tree trunks outside the circular shape suggests an aerial view point while the frontal view is within the circular shape.

Following the *shamsah* page is the frontispiece which depicts plant and lamp motifs within the architectural structure of a mosque. The reconstructed drawings of this frontispiece<sup>104</sup> published by Oleg Grabar reveal the use of multiple viewpoints to depict space.<sup>105</sup> Within the arches are lamps and at the far end of the mosque is a

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<sup>103</sup> Oleg Grabar had pointed out that there is a stream painted at the base of the vertical trees in the frontispiece of this Qur'ân. Probably, similar basic elements such as the plant motifs, the flowing water and the 'light' can also be found in this *shamsah* page. See Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament. The A. W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1989. The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Bollingen Series 35/38* (Princeton 1992), 157.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, figs.127 &128.

<sup>105</sup> For later uses of this devices, see Zain, in his Chapter on 'The Concept of Space in Persian Miniature Painting', in his book entitled "*Formal Values*", pp. 59-80, and, for space in general, Hillenbrand, 'The Uses of Space in Timurid Painting', in *Timurid Art and Culture : Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. L. Golombek and M. Subtelny (Leiden, 1992), pp. 76-102.

garden (see Figs. 2 and 3).<sup>106</sup> Thus, three important elements were clearly depicted by the artist as symbols used in the frontispiece of the Qur'ân. Muslims believe that the mosque is the house of God, while the lamps symbolise the concept of divine light, and the symbol for paradise is the garden with flowing water itself. These three elements continue to be used throughout later centuries but with many stylistic modifications. On the other hand, there seems to be a logical development in the depiction of meaning in these three illuminated pages of the Şan<sup>c</sup>â' Qur'ân (see Figs. 1, 2 and 3). The pages begin with the abstract symbol of *shamsah*, followed by the courtyard or garden courtyard which is represented by the plant motif at the centre, and the depiction of the interior of the mosque itself with its *mihrâb* at the extreme end. These three pages had probably portrayed one of the finest examples of early Islamic paintings and artistic skills in the Qur'ânic art of illumination.

The Şan<sup>c</sup>â' Qur'ân had set a standard that became tradition in the Qur'ânic art of illumination in the following centuries. This tradition had undergone many changes and by the time it reaches the Safavid period, the architectural scene seems to be out of fashion and in replacement is the carpet-page. The basic shape for the *shamsah* symbol still remain in use but the decorative build-up had changed tremendously. The symbolic meaning of 'light', garden and mosque continue to be used in the Safavid Qur'âns. Safavid *shamsahs* can be placed among the most abstract symbols ever invented to represent these three symbolic meanings. Initially, in the 8th-century Şan'a Qur'ân, the depiction of these three elements was in a recognisable form except for the *shamsah* design which has no architectural structure. In the frontispiece, the

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<sup>106</sup> Oleg Grabar did not include the lamps in his reconstructed drawings. Along with the architectural structure and the gardens, it is imperative that these lamps be included because they are part of the whole symbolic message depicted in the frontispiece.

lamps, the gardens and the mosque were depicted in the language familiar in the miniature paintings of a secular manuscript. Gradually, by the 14th century, all these three elements were transformed into a single abstract form, namely the symbol of the *shamsah*. There are no more literal symbols of lamps, garden and mosque in such a frontispiece (see Pl. 6). Instead, all these elements were abstractly presented as one within the symbol of *shamsah*. The garden is now represented by the floral arabesque design. The lamp is represented in the total symbolic form of the *shamsah* itself, and the mosque too is actually represented by the *shamsah* design which is commonly found in mosque domes. By the Safavid period, artists had managed to present this *shamsah* in its most refined and symbolic form.

Close examination of the uninscribed Safavid *shamsahs* shows that similar formulae were used to those found in inscribed *shamsahs*. The only difference is that basically the uninscribed *shamsah* design is much more intricate. For example, in the flower-type *shamsah* design the central area is much smaller so as to allow more floral design within the *shamsah*. An example of this can be seen in the *shamsah* of a 16th-century Qur'ân<sup>107</sup> in the Chester Beatty Library (see Pl. 31). The basic structure for this *shamsah* consists of two geometrical shapes: one circle and two overlapping squares. There are sixteen blue floral finial lines surrounding this *shamsah*. Three strong basic colours are used within the *shamsah* design: blue, red and gold. Last but not least, the many minute flowers of red, yellow, light blue and white are well distributed within the area between the inner flower design and the edge of the *shamsah*. Another variation of an uninscribed *shamsah* can be found in the Samarqand Qur'ân dated 994/1585-86 (see Pl. 27).<sup>108</sup> This *shamsah* design was depicted in the circular type.

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<sup>107</sup> CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).

<sup>108</sup> See Welch, "*The Fâlnâme of Shâh Tahmâsp*", pl.78.

Other than the uninscribed *shamsah*, there are also uninscribed carpet page designs depicted in frontispieces. This tradition was initially invented in the horizontal format Qur'âns and lasted until the end of the 10th century. Gradually, from the 11th century onwards, this tradition was transferred into the new vertical-format Qur'âns. The decorative scheme found in the uninscribed carpet page before the 11th century employs more gold than any other colour. Examples of this tradition can be seen in Déroche's book cataloguing the Khalili collection.<sup>109</sup> By the beginning of the 11th century onwards, the abundant use of gold gradually began to diminish. Rich colours such as blue, red, green, yellow and a range of pastel colours were introduced in this type of uninscribed carpet page. The overall design began to reflect intricacy in design such as the use of overlapping floral and geometric structures. There are no *ʿunwâns* and no vertical or horizontal tripartite structural design. The only similarity with the inscribed carpet page is in the three-layered frame design. If any *shamsah* design is to be incorporated, it will of course be at the centre of the carpet page or frontispiece. Examples of this carpet-page frontispiece can be seen in a Qur'ân from Herât (?) datable ca. 1425-50 A.D. (see Pl. 32),<sup>110</sup> and in another Qur'ân datable ca. 1475-1500 A.D. from Shîrâz or Tabrîz (see Pl. 33).<sup>111</sup>

All these illuminated frontispieces, whether in the form of a *shamsah* or a carpet page, were acceptable in the decoration of a Qur'ân. This is because there are no literal representations of nature or recognisable forms depicted. A preference for uninscribed *shamsahs* or for carpet page frontispieces could be due to other factors in

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<sup>109</sup> See Déroche, *AT*, pl.24.

<sup>110</sup> CBL Ms. 1500 (Arberry no. 143). See James, *QB*, pl.54; and Lentz and Glen Lowry, *Timur*, cat. no. 102.

<sup>111</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.8.

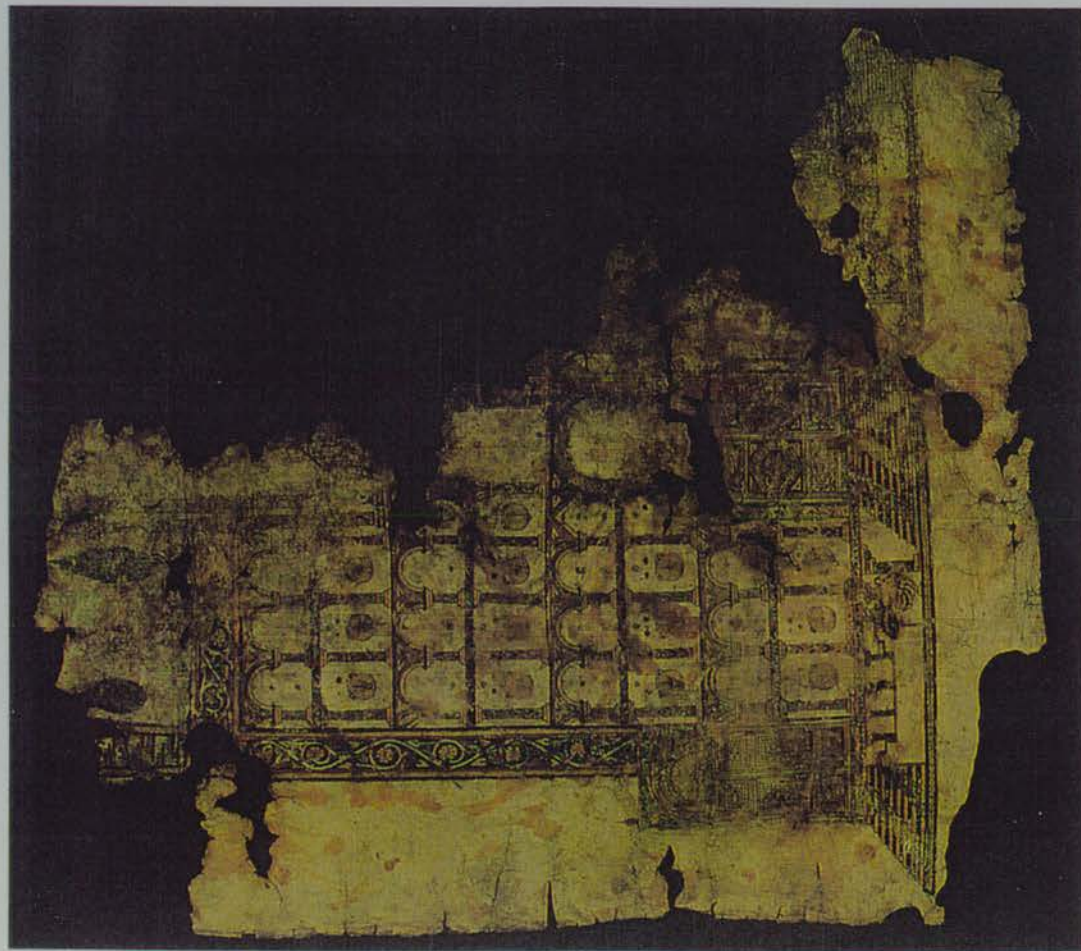


the book-making industry. The standard practice was to have an uninscribed *shamsah* or carpet-page frontispiece depicted on the very first page of a manuscript. Any text included in such designs was only added at the quest of whoever commissioned the Qur'ân. Of course, this would cost a little more than an uninscribed frontispiece of the same kind because of the extra job given to the artist. Secular manuscripts also laid claim to such exclusiveness by having a similar treatment of the first page. It was presumably the existence of different classes and degrees of sophistication of patrons encouraged the development of various styles in the illumination of manuscripts.



Pl. 28. The *shamsah* page from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century (?), San'â' National Museum.





Pl. 29 and 30. Frontispiece or finispiece from a Qur'ân, parchment, 8th century (?),  
San<sup>c</sup>â, National Museum.

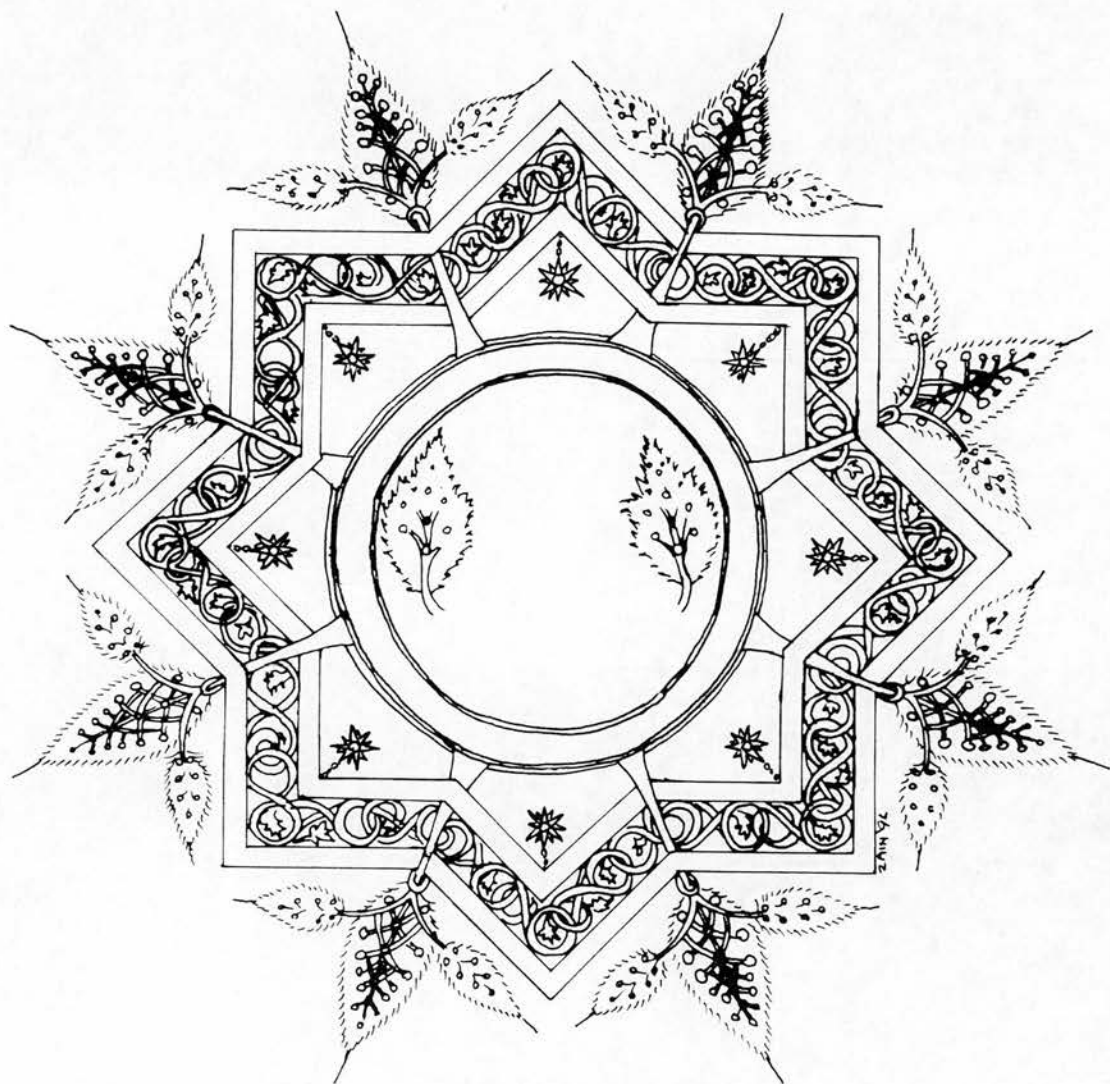
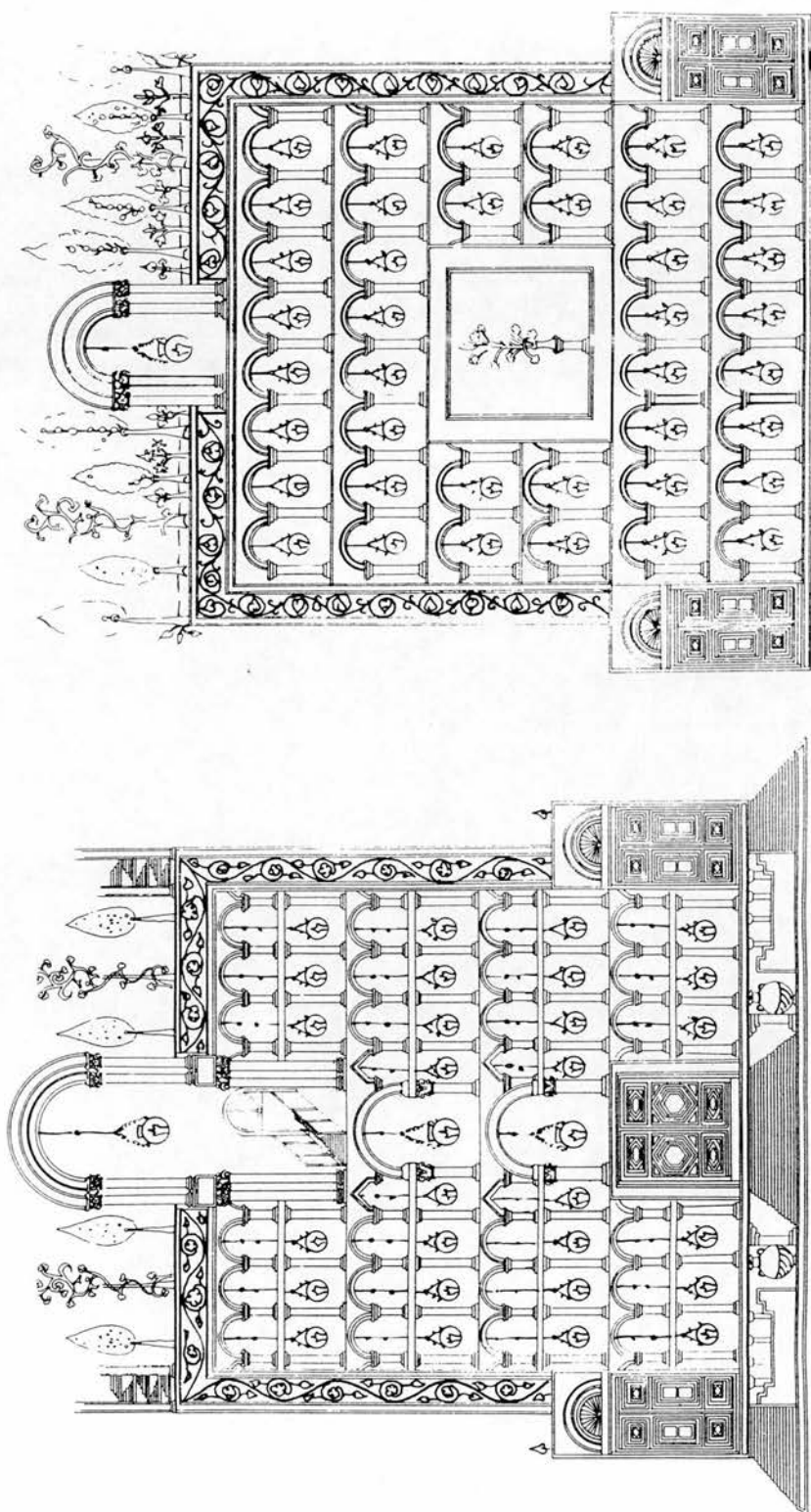
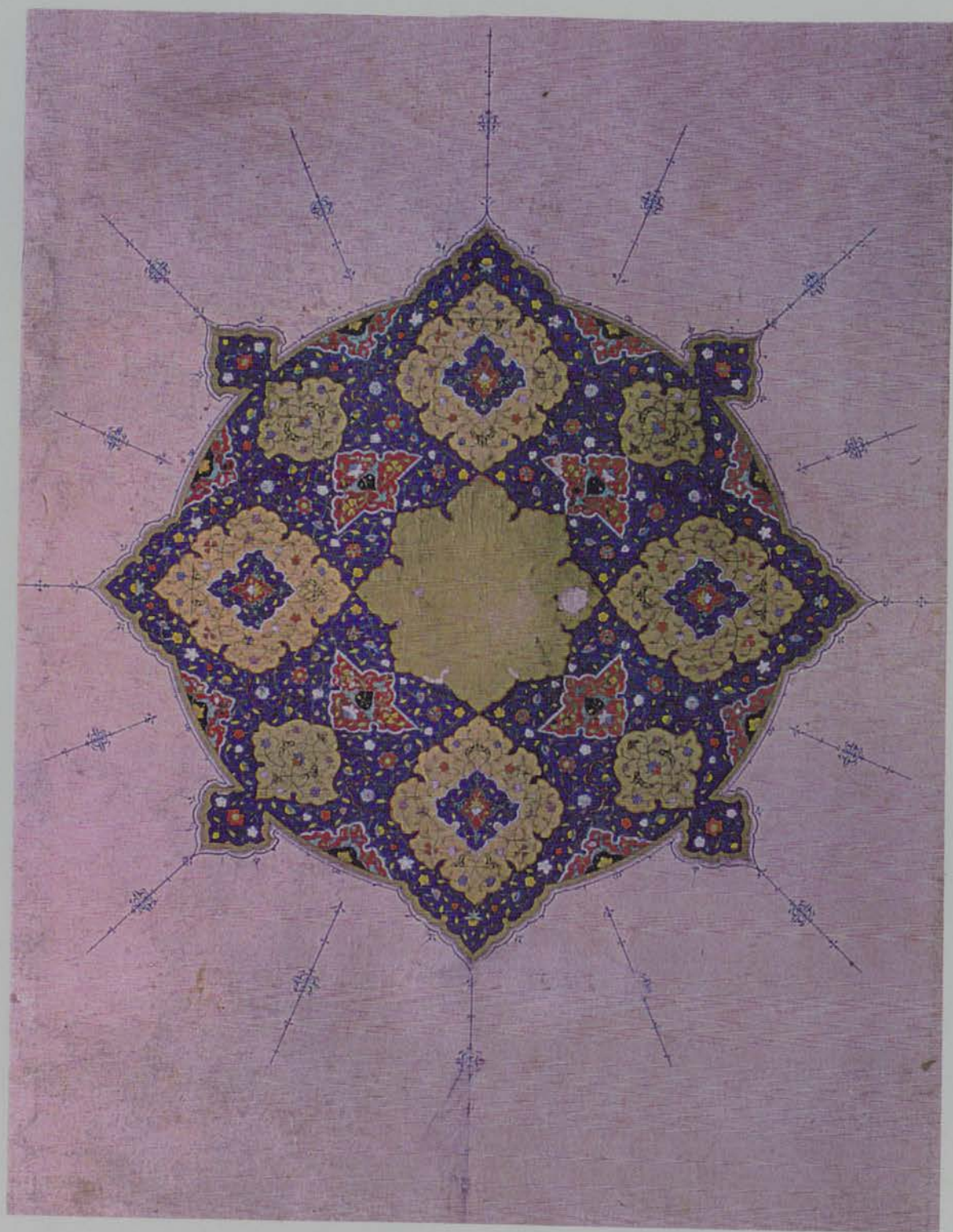


Fig. 1. Reconstruction of pl. 27. The *shamsah* page from a Qur'ân, 8th century, ŞanCâ' National Museum.



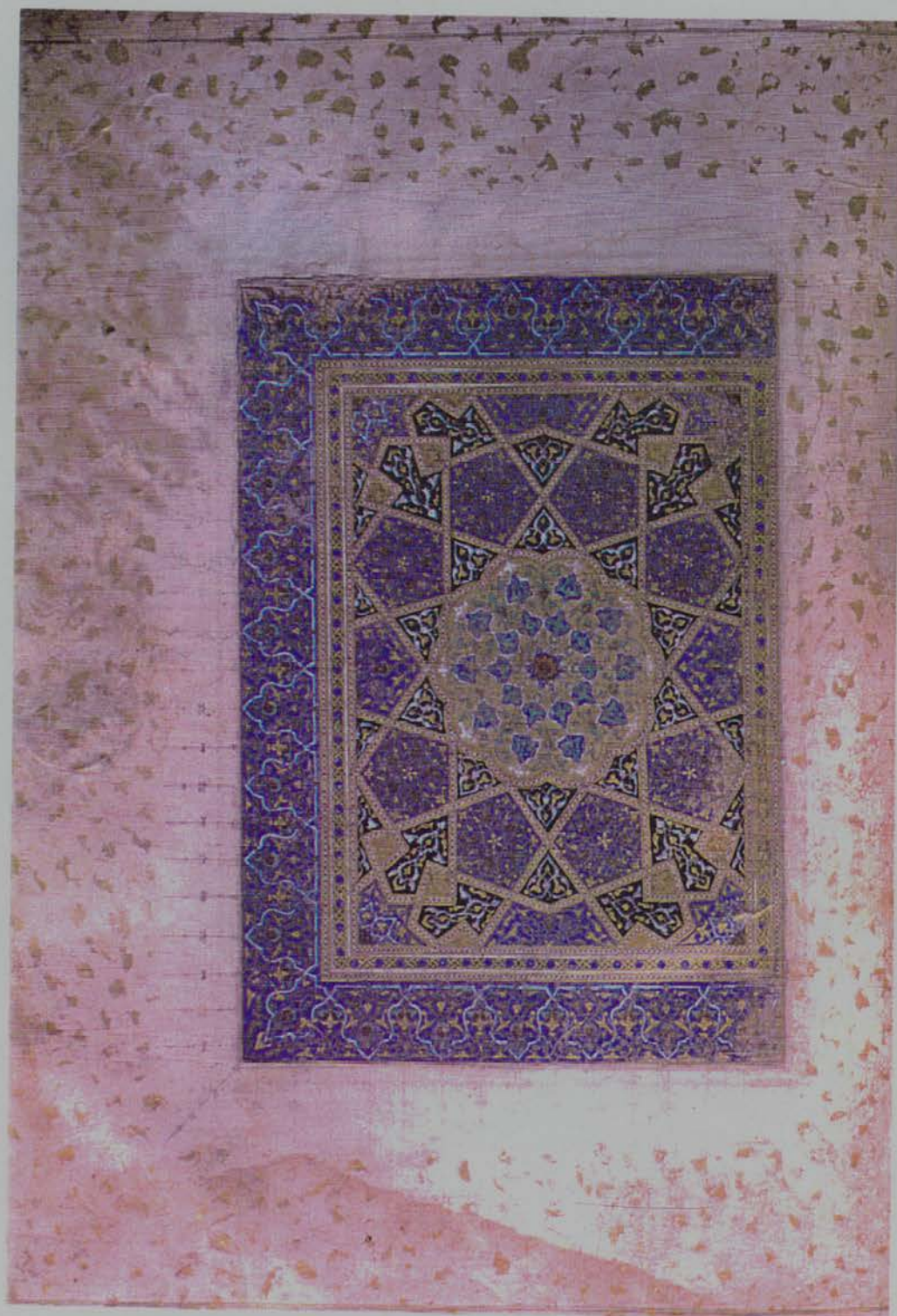


Figs. 2 and 3. Reconstruction of pls. 28 and 29 (based on the drawing published by Oleg Grabar but with added lamps within the arches and borders). Frontispiece from a Qur'ân, 8th century, Şan'â' National Museum.



Pl. 31. *Shamsah* design from a single-volume Qur'ân.  
CBL MS. 1545 (Arberry no.162).





Pl. 32. Carpet-page from a single-volume Qur'ân. CBL Ms. 1500 (Arberry no. 143).



Pl. 33. Carpet-page from a single-volume Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Tabrîz.  
Datable 1475-1500 A.D. Khalili, QUR128.



#### 4. Preliminary Conclusion

The most decorated pages in Safavid Qur'ans are those in the frontispieces. These pages are meant only as decorative pages for the Qur'ân and are not considered part of the text. Nevertheless, there are also some inscribed frontispieces found in illuminated Qur'âns. These inscriptions are *âyât* taken from the Qur'ân itself. There is no strict rule as to which *âyât* should be inscribed in these frontispieces, but it became an unstated rule that only certain *âyât* could be used for illuminated frontispieces in the Qur'ân. Later, it became a tradition followed by later generations of artists and patrons.

In the case of Safavid Qur'âns, at least until the end of the 16th century, only certain *âyât* were chosen for their frontispieces. This clearly suggests a distinct motivation or preference amongst Safavid artists and patrons. Their choice seem to have concentrated on *Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah* and *Sûrah al-Isrâ'*. Not all of these two *sûrahs* were inscribed in the frontispieces. Only *âyât* 77-80 from *Sûrah* 56 and *ayah* 88 from *Sûrah* 17 were specifically chosen to deliver a certain message. Both carry messages pertaining to the Qur'ân itself. *Sûrah* 17:88 was inscribed more frequently on the first pages of Safavid Qur'âns than *Sûrah* 56:77-80. This is a relatively new trend because this happened less frequently before the Safavid period. Indeed, the pre-Safavid period can be regarded as experimental, for many *âyât* from different *sûrahs* were inscribed in frontispieces. Of all the many *âyât* used, the most popular was from *Sûrah* 56:77-80, but during the Safavid period the situation gradually changed. This *sûrah* continued to be most preferred *sûrah*, but was given a permanent place on the covers of the Qur'ân. On the other hand, *Sûrah* 17:88, which is not so popular in Qur'ânic frontispieces before the Safavid period, is now given great attention. Most Safavid Qur'âns contain *Sûrah* 17:88 in their frontispieces.

Considering the content of these two *sûrahs*, the placement of these two *âyât* was most appropriate. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 is concerned with cleanliness while *Sûrah* 17:88 is concerned the authenticity of the Qur'ân. These factors suggest the maturity of the Safavid artists in their selection of *âyah* from the Qur'ân for a specific purpose. Moreover, the artists exploited the most commonly known facts among the Muslims about the Qur'ân as well as the standard etiquette in handling the Qur'ân. What is important here is that the message is direct and simple, and that it further enhances spiritually the art of making Qur'âns.

While the content of inscribed frontispieces is obviously significant, uninscribed frontispieces can also be said to have their own abstract meaning. From an aesthetic point of view, these frontispieces consist of three symbolic elements: the lamp, garden and mosque. The lamp is a symbol of light, the garden is a symbol for paradise and the mosque is the house of God. These elements can be traced as early as the 8th-century Şan'a Qur'ân in Yemen. These symbols had developed into abstract form in Safavid Qur'âns. Muslims believe that the Qur'ân is the Word of God Himself and symbolically the light of God. There is, of course, a specific chapter on light, *Sûrah* 24 (*al-Nûr*), and also other *sûrahs* or *âyât* in the Qur'ân which refer to God's word as light. The concept of light has a deep meaning which concerns every aspect of human life. The *shamsah*, which symbolises light, was placed at the centre in both inscribed and uninscribed frontispieces. The positioning of this *shamsah* at the centre has a religious and ritual significance. It symbolises the universe, and thus as a whole carries strong symbolic meaning about the Qur'ân.

Stylistically, Safavid artists managed to produce three different types of design in their frontispieces. The inscribed *shamsah* has two sub-types, multi-layered flower *shamsahs* and circular *shamsahs*. The internal design area for the *âyah* is circular

shape or flower-shaped. The flower-shaped *shamsah* consists of a hidden structure of overlapping squares. Gold was predominantly used for the background of the written area. The other major colours used in this type of design are blue and gold with little spots of red, light blue, green, pastel colours and white. The motifs were harmoniously arranged. Some recognisable alien motifs, such as Chinese cloud motifs and lotus flowers, can be found in Safavid design. The scripts were always written in white and in a mixture of styles. There is a combination of Arab and Persian styles of writing. This can be seen especially in the style of writing the letter *sîn*. In the illuminated *shamsah* carpet-page, the artists used a tripartite concept in their design. The top and bottom *ʿumwâns*, as well as the *shamsah* at the centre, contained *âyat* from two different *sûrahs* in the Qur'ân. Other aspects of design, such as colours, motifs and basic structures, are similar to those of the *shamsah* designs mentioned earlier.

Finally, all these characteristics can be compared with the design of secular manuscripts and other art forms before and during the Safavid period. For example in miniature paintings as well as in carpet design. In secular manuscripts less gold was used and more blue. The internal script in the *debacha*, for example, uses less white. The basic structures for the design of carpets can also be seen in the frontispieces or the illuminated pages of *Sûrahs* 1 and 2. Safavid artists had inherited models from their predecessors and managed to produce innumerable innovations. Basic rules and regulations in the form of Qur'ânic production were strictly observed to ensure continuity in the tradition of book making.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Calligraphy and its aesthetic role in Safavid Qur'âns**

#### **1. Background**

#### **2 Types of script**

##### **2.1. Qur'âns in the Kufic scripts, 8th-10th centuries**

##### **2. 2. Cursive scripts (11th-14th centuries): Qur'ân in the *muhaqqaq* script**

###### **2. 2. 1. The combination technique**

###### **2. 3. The single-script technique in the 15th century**

###### **2. 3. 1. The combination technique**

##### **2. 4. The single-script technique: Qur'âns in *nastâ'liq***

###### **2. 4. 1. The standard script (*naskh*)**

###### **2. 4. 2. The combination of three scripts**

#### **3. Writing as pattern**

##### **3. 1. Letters as pattern**

##### **3. 2. Letters as pattern in Safavid Qur'âns**

##### **3. 3. Script as pattern in the Qur'ân: general considerations**

###### **3. 3. 1. 11th-15th centuries**

###### **3. 3. 2. Coloured scripts in Safavid Qur'âns**

#### **4. The decorative background designs for text in Safavid Qur'âns**

#### **5. Preliminary conclusion**



## 1. Background

"It is known that if a hand is legible  
It is a sign of good writing.  
Writing exists in order to be read.  
Not that (readers) should get stuck in it.  
A beautiful writing renders the eye clear,  
The ugliness of writing turns the eye into a bathstove."<sup>1</sup>

The Qur'ân was first transmitted among Muslims by oral tradition.<sup>2</sup> After the death of the Prophet in 10/632, and the death in subsequent battles of many of his *ḥuffâẓ*<sup>3</sup> — those who had memorised the entire Qur'ân — the need to have the Qur'ân in permanent book form was strongly felt. It was ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb who strongly urged the first caliph, Abû Bakr,<sup>4</sup> to entrust the Prophet's secretary, Zayd ibn Thâbit, with the task of collating and writing all the passages in the order indicated by the Prophet.<sup>5</sup> Later, at the time of the caliph ʿUthmân, the Qur'ân was again checked and a canonical<sup>6</sup> form arrived at to produce the first codex known as the *ʿUthmânî*

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<sup>1</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 111.

<sup>2</sup> See Watt & Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, pp.30-39; and Pickthall, *Glorious Qur'ân*, p. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup> Glassé, *CEI*, 143.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Bukhârî, Abû ʿAbdullâh Muhammad ibn Ismâʿîl, *Al-Sahîh*, III. ed. L. Krehl (Leiden, 1868), pp.392-394. See B. Lewis, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople* (London, 1976), pp.1-2; and Watt & Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, 32.

<sup>5</sup> M. Hasbi Ash Shiddieqy, *Ilmu al-Qur'ân/Tafsîr* (Jakarta, 1954), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Watt & Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, 42. See Pickthall, *Glorious Qur'ân*, p.xxviii; and Safadi, *IC*, 8.

*muṣ'ḥaf*<sup>7</sup> (the term *mus'ḥaf* literally means a volume or a book, but gradually came to refer exclusively to a copy of the Qur'ân). Subsequently, four or five identical editions were made and sent to major Muslim cities (Medina, Kufah, Basra, Dasmascus and Mecca)<sup>8</sup> to be used as a standard.<sup>9</sup> It is from these identical editions, distributed throughout Syria, Iraq and Arabia, that different and local types of scripts developed.

## 2. Types of script

### 2.1. Qur'âns in the Kufic script, 8th - 10th centuries

"The letters need to be properly executed, correctly completed, finely perfected, given its characteristics and smoothly released".<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis on good writing begins with the decision made to compile the Qur'ân into book form.<sup>11</sup> Naturally many different styles of writing exist throughout the Muslim world,<sup>12</sup> even if the differences are only minute,<sup>13</sup> or are created simply

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<sup>7</sup> Abdul-Fattah, Hassanin & Saleh, *Tajwid*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Nadîm, *The Fihrist of al-Nadîm*, ed. & tr. by B. Dodge, Vol. I (New York, 1970), 10. See Watt & Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'ân*, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha*. Quoted in Hamad al-Jâsir, *Al-Khatt al-<sup>c</sup>Arabî min Khilâl al-Makhtutât (Arabic Calligraphy in Manuscripts): An Exhibition of Calligraphy at the Islamic Art Gallery, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies*, tr. Abû Ameenah Bilâl Philips (Riyadh, 1986), 30.

<sup>11</sup> Khatibi & Sijelmassi, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> It is not part of this study to go into all the different details or styles of scripts available. The diversity of Arabic scripts demands close observation and time in order to establish a particular style of script. See Déroche, *AT*, 14.

by making the letters larger or smaller. The scribe is at liberty<sup>14</sup> to write in whatever style he wishes and even to invent his own style of writing. Hence the disagreements among scholars as to the terms used for these scripts. For example, the many different terms used for Kufic scripts alone (such as Eastern Kufic, Eastern Persian Kufic, 'broken' Kufic, *naskhi* Kufic, and Western Kufic), and these are not necessarily related to the town of al-Kufah.<sup>15</sup> Basically, these various styles can be grouped under two broad categories, angular scripts and rounded scripts.<sup>16</sup> The angular scripts (the so-called Kufic *muṣḥafī* or Kufic scripts) were usually confined to early Qur'āns (8th-10th centuries)<sup>17</sup> and were gradually replaced by cursive scripts (see Table 1).<sup>18</sup> An example of a Kufic script Qur'ān can be seen in the British Library, copied in the 9th century in the Near East, perhaps in Iraq or Persia (see Pl. 1). This Qur'ān was written on vellum.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> According to Philips, there are more than eighty different varieties of scripts between the 11th and 16th centuries. See Philips, *Al-Khatt*, 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 132.

<sup>16</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> See Déroche *AT*, for fine examples of early Qur'āns.

<sup>18</sup> Philips, *Al-Khatt*, 37. See James, *MS*, 15.

<sup>19</sup> London, British Library, Or. 1397. See Lings, *QAIC*, pl. 1.





## 2. 2. Cursive scripts (11th-14th centuries): Qur'ân in the *muhaqqaq* script

From the 11th century onwards, cursive scripts began to replace Kufic for Qur'âns,<sup>20</sup> namely beginning with *naskh* and gradually followed by *muhaqqaq*, *rayhân*, *riqâ'*, *tawqî'* and *thuluth*.<sup>21</sup> These six styles of writing were invented by Muhammad ibn Muqla (d. 940 A.D.), who was followed by his pupil Abû l-Hasan 'Alî ibn Hilâl, better known as Ibn al-Bawwâb (d. 1022 A.D.), and later by Yâqût al-Musta'îsimî (d. 1298 A.D.).<sup>22</sup> According to Safadi, the *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth* scripts were closely associated with religious manuscripts and in particular the Qur'ân.<sup>23</sup> But, there are also other scripts such as *naskh* and *rayhân* that were frequently used to copy the Qur'ân.<sup>24</sup> The present study shows that, of the six different types of script mentioned above, the most popular script was *muhaqqaq*, followed by *naskh*, *rayhân* and *thuluth*. *Thuluth* was rarely used for Mamlûk Qur'âns.<sup>25</sup> So far no Qur'âns entirely written in *riqâ'* and *tawqî'* scripts are known. In the western Islamic world, Qur'âns retained the conservative *maghribi* script.<sup>26</sup> Most Qur'âns have only a single style of writing for the main text. In these centuries it can be in any one of four styles:

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<sup>20</sup> James, *MS*, 14. See Déroche, *AT*, 34.

<sup>21</sup> James, *MS*, p.15. The earliest dated Qur'ân in *muhaqqaq*, for example, is dated 1160 (*ibid.*, p.16).

<sup>22</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.56-57. See M. Aziza, *La Calligraphie Arabe* (Tunis, 1973), pp.27-31; Safadi, *IC*, 17; and Schimmel, *CIC*, pp.19-21.

<sup>23</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 19.

<sup>24</sup> In a survey conducted on 109 Qur'âns, it is found that the most commonly used script was: *muhaqqaq* (50%), followed by *naskh* (29%), *rayhân* (17%), *thuluth* (5%), *riqâ'* and *tawqî'* (0%).

<sup>25</sup> James, *QM*, 42.

<sup>26</sup> James, *MS*, 12.

*muhaqqaq*; *naskh*; *rayḥân* or *thuluth*. An example of a 14th-century Qur'ân written in *muhaqqaq* script and ascribed to Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>simî (see Pl. 2)<sup>27</sup> can be seen in the Chester Beatty Library.

## 2. 2. 1. The combination technique

The combination technique is when two or more different types of script were used for the main text of the Qur'ân. This technique can be divided into two types: the combination of two different types of script, and the combination of three different types of script. Usually, in both cases, the scripts were presented in different panels or lines in the main text block.

The two-script technique can employ combinations of *muhaqqaq* and *rayḥân*,<sup>28</sup> *muhaqqaq* and *naskh*,<sup>29</sup> *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth*,<sup>30</sup> or *rayḥân* and *thuluth*.<sup>31</sup> A typical example of this technique can be seen in the Khalili collection, in a Qur'ân probably copied in Baghdad and datable ca. 1300-1310 A.D. (see Pl. 3).<sup>32</sup> This Qur'ân was written in the *rayḥân* and *muhaqqaq* scripts. Typical combinations of three scripts are *thuluth*, *naskh* and Kufic,<sup>33</sup> or *naskh*, *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth*. An

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<sup>27</sup> CBL Ms. 1471. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.41.

<sup>28</sup> Khalili, QUR473. See James, *MS*, pl. 22.

<sup>29</sup> Khalili, QUR807. See James, *MS*, pl.43.

<sup>30</sup> Khalili, QUR580. See James, *MS*, pl.42.

<sup>31</sup> Khalili, QUR832. See James, *MS*, pl.25.

<sup>32</sup> Khalili, QUR473. See James, *MS*, pl.22.

<sup>33</sup> Khalili, QUR242. See James, *MS*, pl.31.

example of this latter combination can be seen on a single folio from a Qur'ân, possibly from Yemen, datable ca. 1300-1350 A.D., in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 4).<sup>34</sup> This same combination technique can also be found in *sûrah* headings in the Qur'ân. The favourite scripts used for *sûrah* headings were *thuluth* and Kufic. Sometimes other combinations, such as *rayhân* and *naskh* or *muhaqqaq* and Kufic, are encountered. The scripts used for *sûrah* headings were always differentiated from those used for the main text. In other words, there is always a distinction between the revealed text and the non-revealed text in the Qur'ân.

### 2. 3. The single-script technique in the 15th century<sup>35</sup>

15th-century Qur'âns show different preferences in the type of scripts used for the main text. Prior to this century, most Qur'âns were written in *muhaqqaq*, but this gradually replaced by the *naskh* script. This script gained wider acceptance among scribes,<sup>36</sup> probably because of the nature of the script itself, which is relaxed and easy to execute. The *muhaqqaq* script, along with *rayhân* and *thuluth*, continued to be used for the main text of the Qur'ân, but was not as popular as before. An example of a *naskh* script Qur'ân can be seen in a single-volume Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, datable ca. 1460-1470 and perhaps made in Istanbul (see Pl. 5).<sup>37</sup>

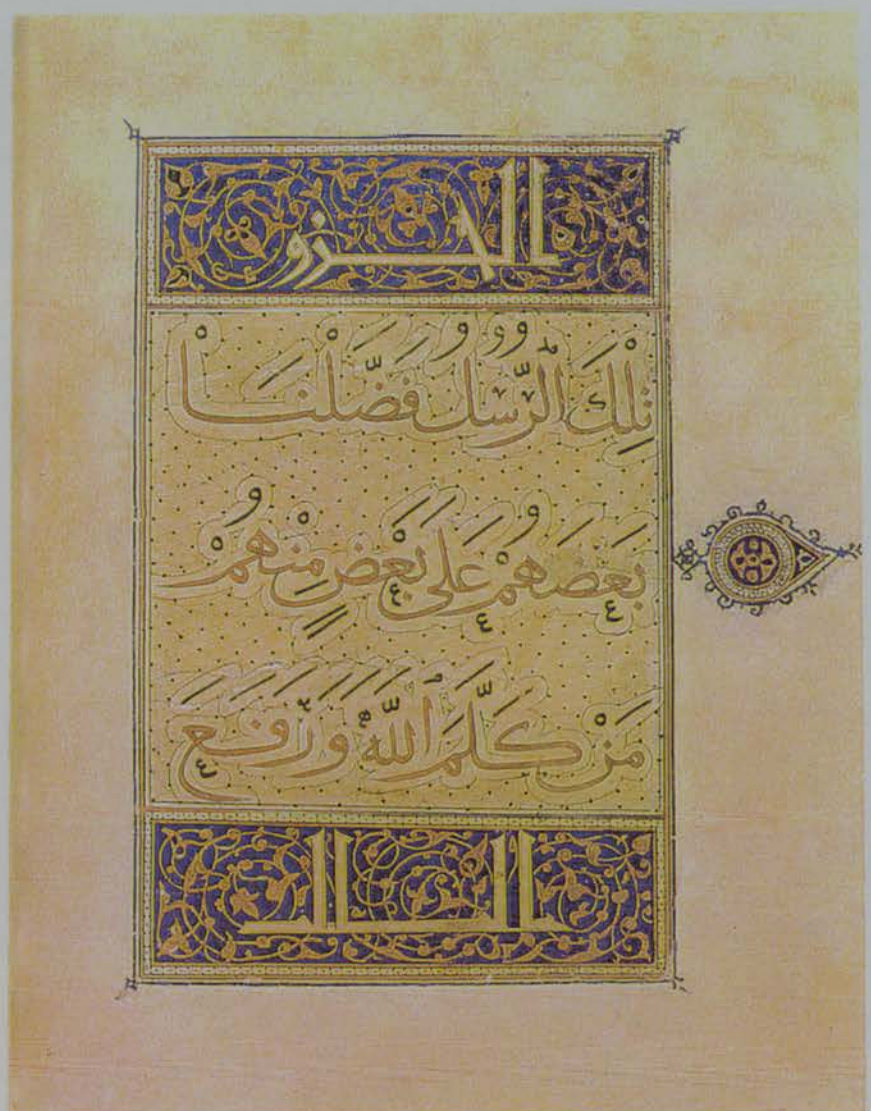
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<sup>34</sup> Khalili, QUR850. See James, *MS*, pl.40.

<sup>35</sup> The term "single-script technique" means that only one type of script was used in the main text of the Qur'ân.

<sup>36</sup> James, *AT*, pp.11-12.

<sup>37</sup> Khalili, QUR34. See James, *AT*, pl.21.



Pl. 2. *Sûrah* 2:253, in *muhaqqaq* script. This Qur'ân is ascribed to Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>simî.



اَسْتَيْسِرَ الرِّسَالُ وَظَنُوا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كَذَّبُوا

جَاهَهُمْ نَصْرًا فَجِئَ مِنْ لَدُنْهُمْ اَنْسَارُ الْقَوْمِ  
الْمُجْرِمِينَ لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قصصهم عبرة لاولي  
الالباب مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِنْ  
صُدُّوا عَنِ الدِّينِ يُبَيِّنُ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّهُمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
وَهَدَى رَحْمَةً لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ



Pl. 3. *Sûrah* 12:107-11, in a combination of *rayhân* and *muhaqqaq*, possibly copied by Arghun al-Kamîlî. Iraq, probably Baghdad, ca. 1300-1310 A.D.





Pl. 5. Single volume Qur'ân in *naskh* script, from Istanbul, ca. 1460-1470 A.D.



### 2. 3. 1. The combination technique

Similar principles can also be found in 15th-century Qur'âns. The commonest combination of scripts used was that of *naskh* and *muhaqqaq*. A single-volume Qur'ân from Shîrâz or Tabrîz, datable ca. 1475-1500 A.D., in the Khalili collection, can best illustrate this combination of *naskh* and *muhaqqaq* (see Pl. 6).<sup>38</sup> When a combination of three scripts was employed, it usually comprised *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*. This can be seen in part 6 of a 30-part Qur'ân from Iran, datable to the 15th century A.D. (see Pl. 7).<sup>39</sup> The text is written in two blocks containing three and four lines of *naskh* script respectively and is separated by a central band of *thuluth*. The top and bottom bands are in *muhaqqaq*. Other combinations, whether of two or of three scripts, used in earlier periods for the main text of the Qur'ân were less favoured by the scribes. For *sûrah* headings, only one script tended to be used, whether this was *thuluth*,<sup>40</sup> *riqāʿ* or *naskh*.<sup>41</sup> If more than one was used, the combinations were *muhaqqaq* and Kufic<sup>42</sup> or *thuluth* and Kufic<sup>43</sup> scripts.

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<sup>38</sup> Khalili, QUR128. See James, *AT*, pl.8.

<sup>39</sup> Khalili, QUR95. See James, *AT*, pl.7.

<sup>40</sup> Khalili, QUR438. See James, *AT*, pl.1.

<sup>41</sup> Khalili, QUR123. See James, *AT*, pl.24.

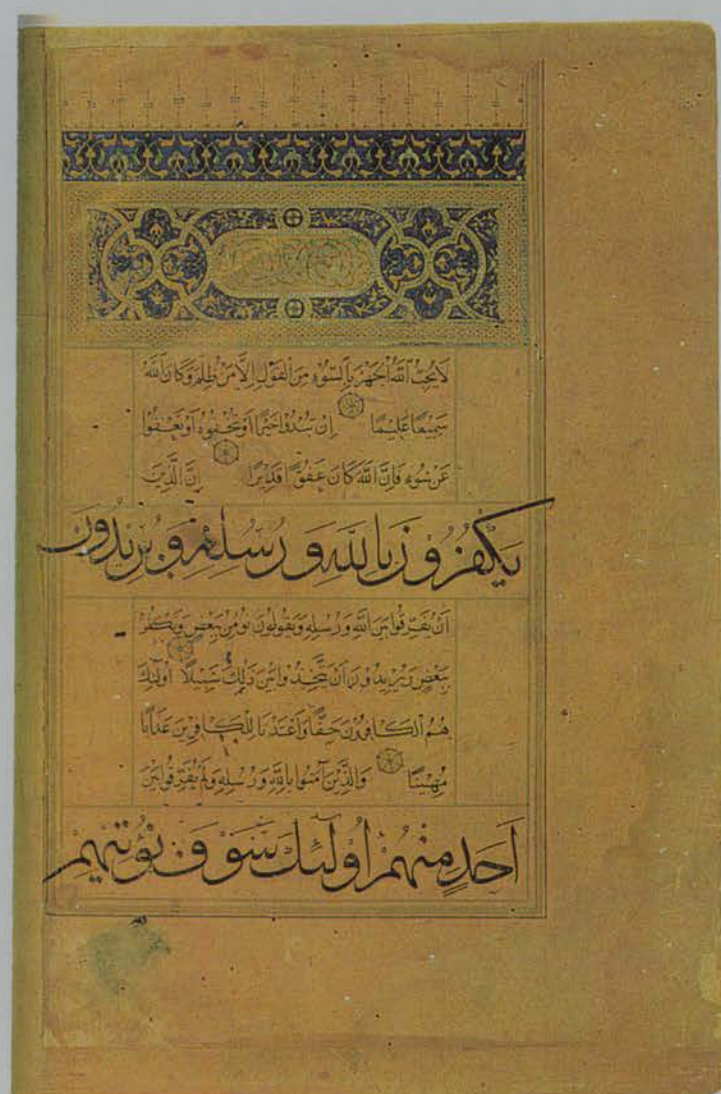
<sup>42</sup> Khalili, QUR95. See James, *AT*, pl.7.

<sup>43</sup> Khalili, QUR171. See James, *AT*, pl.10.





Pl. 6. Qur'ân in *naskh* and *muhaqqaq* scripts, Shiraz or Tabriz, ca. 1475-1500 A.D.



Pl. 7. Part 6 of a 30-part Qur'ân in a combination of *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts, Iran, 15th century A.D.

## 2. 4. The single-script technique: Qur'âns in *nastā'liq*

"The condition of love is not elegant beauty, just like a Koran [*sic*] in *nastā'liq*."<sup>44</sup>

The late 14th and 15th century, had witnessed the introduction of *ta'liq* and, later, *nastā'liq* script.<sup>45</sup> *Ta'liq* was an offshoot of an early script known as *Firāmûz* and employed in the 9th century A.D.<sup>46</sup> "Its inventor was Khwāja Tâj-i Salmânî, a native of Isfâhân."<sup>47</sup> The word *nastā'liq* was a neologism coined from *naskh* and *ta'liq*, and is a variant of the *ta'liq*,<sup>48</sup> used until *nastā'liq* ousted it.<sup>49</sup> The person often credited as the founder of the script was Khwāja Mîr 'Alî Tabrîzî (d. 1416 A.D.).<sup>50</sup> Other master calligraphers in this script were Qâsim Shâdî, Shâh Kabîr ibn 'Uways al-Ardabîlî, Kamâl al-Dîn Herâtî, Ghiyâth al-Dîn al-Isfâhânî and 'Imâd al-Dîn al-Husaynî.<sup>51</sup> During the reign of Shâh 'Abbâs, *nastā'liq* reached its golden age.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A. Schimmel, *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture* (London, 1990), 30.

<sup>45</sup> Safadi, *IC*, p.27.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 84.

<sup>48</sup> *Op. cit.*, p.27. In a recent unpublished paper given in *The Art of the Mongols* symposium at Edinburgh in August 1995, Elaine Wright presented compelling evidence that *nastā'liq* originated in Shîrâz in the 1360s and 1370s.

<sup>49</sup> C. Huart, *Les Calligraphes et Les Miniaturistes de l'Orient Musulman* (Paris, 1908), 207.

<sup>50</sup> See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 100; Safadi, *IC*, 27; and Welch, *Calligraphy*, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 28.

<sup>52</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, 30.



The *ta'liq* was more confined to chancellery purposes<sup>53</sup> while the *nasta'liq* for the writing of secular manuscripts.<sup>54</sup> Both these scripts were seldom used for copying the Qur'ân.<sup>55</sup> Only later, that is in the Safavid period, *nasta'liq* script was elevated by being employed to copy the Qur'ân.<sup>56</sup> According to Qâdî Ahmad, Maulânâ Dûst-Muhammad from Herât, wrote a Qur'ân in *nasta'liq* and was rewarded by Shâh Tahmâsp.<sup>57</sup> However, according to Huart, who does not cite his source, Dust Muhammad copied a Qur'ân in *ta'liq*.<sup>58</sup> There is also a complete Qur'ân in *nasta'liq* made for Shâh Tahmâsp by Shâh Maḥmûd al-Nîshâpûrî,<sup>59</sup> probably from Tabriz, in 945-6/1538-39. (see Pl. 8).<sup>60</sup> This Qur'ân is now in the collection of the Topkapi Saray Library in Istanbul. This particular Qur'ân, so far as is known, is the earliest *nasta'liq* Qur'ân<sup>61</sup> existed.

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<sup>53</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.90-97. See Schimmel, *CIC*, 29.

<sup>54</sup> Siddiqui, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 28. Schimmel considered it unusual for a Qur'ân to be copied in *nasta'liq*. See Schimmel, *CIC*, 59.

<sup>56</sup> This study has not found any evidence of a Qur'ân written in *ta'liq* script. See Safadi, *IC*, pp.27-31.

<sup>57</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, pp.146-47.

<sup>58</sup> Huart, *Calligraphes*, 220. It is worth noting that none of the Qur'âns listed in the appendix to this thesis is executed in *ta'liq* script.

<sup>59</sup> Shâh Maḥmûd Nîshâpûrî was the nephew of the noted master of *nasta'liq*, Mawlana ʿAbdi, who served under Shâh Tahmâsp. See Welch, *Calligraphy*, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, HS25. See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 136; Lings, *QACI*, pl.91; Safadi, *IC*, 28; and Schimmel, *CIC*, 30.

<sup>61</sup> Siddiqui had cited a jade Qur'ân stand with *nasta'liq* style of inscription, dated 629/1231 in Salarjung Museum, in Hyderabad. There is a high probability that a *nasta'liq* Qur'ân had already existed during this period. See Siddiqui, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 18.





#### 2. 4. 1. The standard script (*naskh*)

Besides *nastā'liq*, the long — familiar scripts — *muhaqqaq*, *naskh*, *rayḥân*, *riqā'* and *thuluth* continued to be used for Safavid Qur'âns, although *riqā'*<sup>62</sup> was only used for *sûrah* headings even though the text block was in a different script. Sometimes one may also find *thuluth* script being used for *sûrah* headings. In single-script Qur'âns, *naskh* was the most commonly used script, with only a few Qur'âns in *muhaqqaq*.<sup>63</sup> One result of the present study is to show that, by the turn of the 17th century, *muhaqqaq* had almost totally disappeared from the main text of Safavid Qur'âns. Why this occurs is not known. The popularity of the *naskh* script was probably due to the fact that the structure of the script itself facilitated pen-strokes which could be executed at a faster rate than those of *thuluth* script.<sup>64</sup> A typical *naskh* Qur'ân is in the Khalili collection; it was copied by Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tabṣī al-Shirâzī, is dated 952/1545-6 and was made in Shîrâz (see Pl. 9).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> From the survey conducted on 79 Safavid Qur'âns, no *riqā'* script was used for the main text.

<sup>63</sup> In a survey conducted on 79 Safavid Qur'âns, it is found that for a single script Qur'ân, about 57% were written in *naskh*, 5% in *muhaqqaq* and 1% in *nastā'liq*.

<sup>64</sup> Philips, *Al-Khatt*, 52.

<sup>65</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, 39.





## 2. 4. 2. The combination of two scripts

The four groups of scripts found in combination in the Safavid Qur'âns are as follows: a). *Naskh* and *thuluth*. b). *Muhaqqaq* and *naskh*. c). *Thuluth* and *tawqî*<sup>c</sup>. d). *Rayhân* and *naskh*. Of these four, the combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* seems to have been the preferred one.<sup>66</sup> An example of the use of *naskh* and *thuluth* together can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muhammad ibn Muqaddam dated 979/1571, in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 10).<sup>67</sup> Next most popular is the combination *muhaqqaq* and *naskh* scripts.<sup>68</sup> The other two combinations, 'c' (*thuluth* and *tawqî*<sup>c</sup>)<sup>69</sup> and 'd' (*rayhân* and *naskh*)<sup>70</sup>, seem to have been less popular and indeed disappeared at the close of the 16th century.<sup>71</sup> The elegance and grace found in both the *naskh* and the *thuluth* scripts cannot be denied. Together, these scripts were those most preferred by Safavid rulers or princes. Thus Shâh Tahmâsp in his youthful days wrote in *thuluth*, *naskh* and *nastâ'liq* scripts. Shâh <sup>c</sup>Abbâs's interest in writing was indirectly shown by his willingness to hold a candlestick for his favourite <sup>c</sup>Alî Riza of Tabrîz, who

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<sup>66</sup> In the survey conducted on 79 Safavid Qur'âns, 15% had used the combination *naskh* and *thuluth*, 7% in *muhaqqaq* and *naskh*, 1% in *thuluth* and *tawqî* and 1% in *rayhan* and *naskh*.

<sup>67</sup> Khalili, QUR625. See James, *AT*, pl.49.

<sup>68</sup> Sotheby's, 13 October 1981, lot 274.

<sup>69</sup> CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry no. 153). This Qur'ân was copied by Maqsûd <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Sharîf al-Tabrîzî and illuminated by Mawlânâ Bâ'bâ' al-Tabrîzî, dated 961/1554. See James, *QB*, pl.64.

<sup>70</sup> Sotheby's, 10 October 1977, lot 191. This Qur'ân is from Shiraz and datable 2nd half of 16th century A.D.

<sup>71</sup> In the survey conducted, there are no Safavid Qur'ân that contain the combination of group 'c' and 'd' in the 17th century onwards.



excelled predominantly in *thuluth*.<sup>72</sup> Thus *nastā'liq*, *naskh* and *thuluth* had royal backing, which obviously encouraged local scribes to master these scripts. Probably there was a greater chance of being selected for the royal library or atelier, if the scribes concentrated on mastering only these scripts. The different types of script found in the Qur'ân can therefore testify to the preferences of Safavid calligraphers.

*Naskh* script is quite close to that of the *thuluth*. "The width of *naskh* characters is about one third that of *thuluth*. However, if *naskh* script is written with a *thuluth* pen in *thuluth* size script while keeping the *naskh* script rules, the resulting script is still considered *naskh*."<sup>73</sup> Most *sûrah* headings were written in *thuluth* script. This is the perfect script for decorative panels of the *sûrah* headings. According to Philips, it is the most visually charming of the scripts and the most difficult to write and to master.<sup>74</sup> It also gives greater opportunities for the artist to display his artistic skills. The elegance and grace of this script complemented the decorative illuminated background in the *sûrah* heading. *Riqā'c* script was also used for the *sûrah* headings in the Safavid Qur'âns, but not often.<sup>75</sup> According to Safadi, this script has a close affinity with *thuluth*.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, all these scripts are stylistically related and are based on Ibn Muqlâ's method of writing.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Schimmel, *Calligraphy*, pp.64-65.

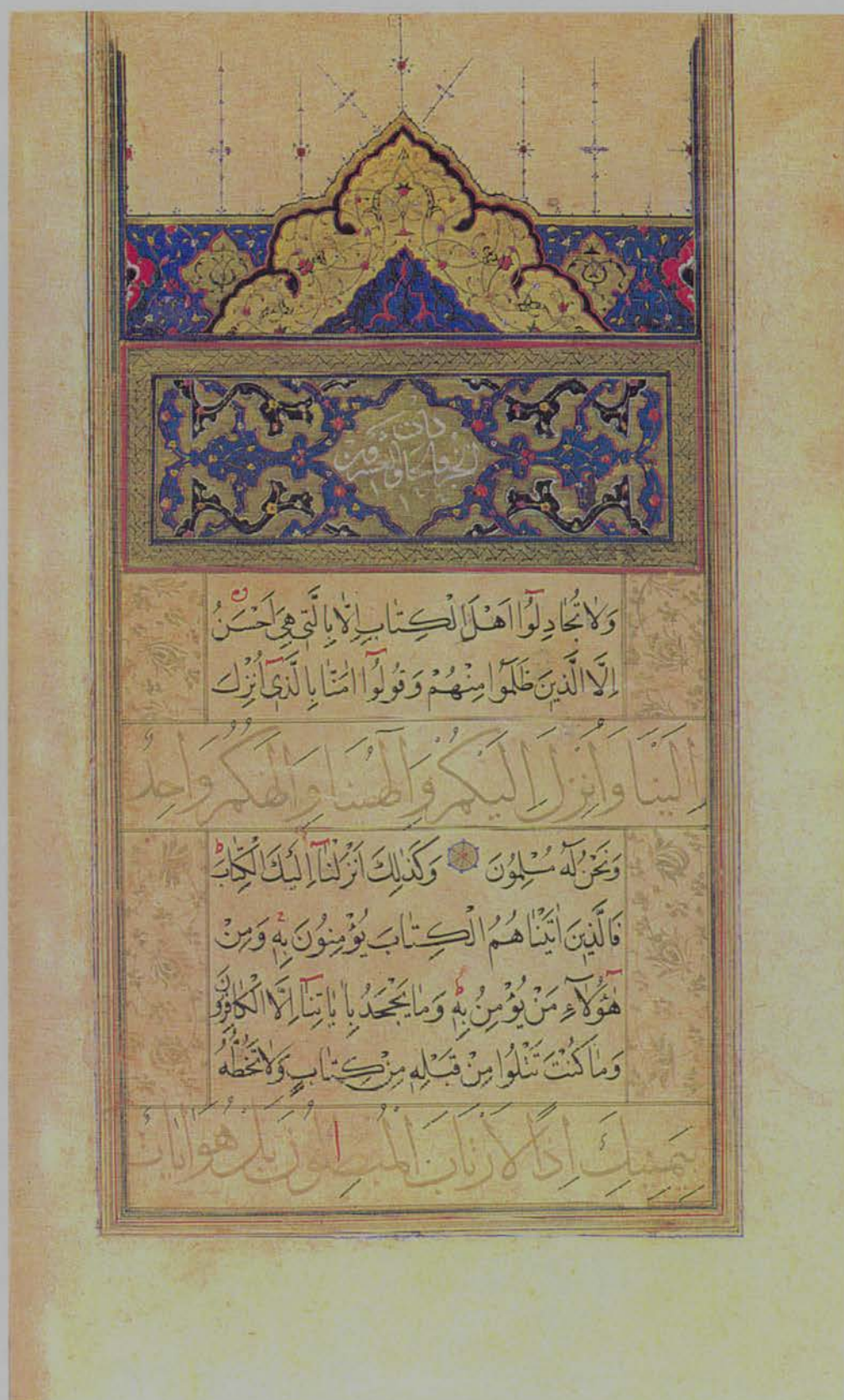
<sup>73</sup> Philips, *Al-Khatt*, 52.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>75</sup> See 2.4.1 in this Chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Safadi, *IC*, 76.

<sup>77</sup> See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 56. See also El-Said and Parman, *Geometric*, 131.



Pl.10. Qur'ân in a combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts. Copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muhammad ibn Muqaddam dated 979/1571, Khalili, QUR625.

## 2. 4. 2. The combination of three scripts

The second type of Qur'ân consist of the combination of three scripts for the main text: usually *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*, and *naskh*, *thuluth* and *muhaqqaq*. These combination are rare and only two groups of it of which the present writer is aware are both of the 16th century.<sup>78</sup> The first example of this type of combination can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Habiballâh al-Kâtib al-Marâghî, datable ca. 1560-1570 A.D., made in Herât or Marâghah, in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 11).<sup>79</sup> The second is in the Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 1545 (see Pl. 10).<sup>80</sup> Obviously, this technique was difficult because it required mastery in three different styles of writing. Perhaps, too, in later Safavid times there were not many wealthy patrons to commission such an elaborate Qur'ân. Only a select few scribes could acquire the requisites skills in several styles of writing, and these were master calligraphers. Hence far fewer Qur'âns in this combination were produced.

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<sup>78</sup> Of the 79 Qur'âns consulted, 4 Qur'âns are in the combination of *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*, and 1 Qur'ân in the combination of *naskh*, *thuluth* and *muhaqqaq*.

<sup>79</sup> Khalili, QUR178. See James, *AT*, pl.36.

<sup>80</sup> CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).





Pl. 11. Qur'ân in *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh* scripts. Copied by Habiballâh al-Katib al-Marâghî, ca. 1560-1570 A.D., Herât or Marâghah.



### 3. Writing as pattern

"An excellent handwriting, O brother, is soul ravishing,  
Like a soul in the body of young and old.  
For the rich man it is an adornment,  
For the needy one it is an aid."<sup>81</sup>

This statement reflects a high level of sophistication in the attitude to calligraphy. For many Muslims, calligraphy is also a reflection of knowledge, culture and civilisation.<sup>82</sup> The nature and versatility of Arabic writing provided many opportunities for artistic experimentation. The visual potential of the style of writing itself was stretched to the limit. One important aspect of calligraphy is its transformation into another form of art. Calligraphy, in other words, can be transformed or seen as patterns or as elements of decoration within the text block. Letters are sometimes systematically written and so arranged as to create special effects within the text block, exploiting the capacity of the brain to recognise patterns.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, "the Qur'ân itself is the most perfect example of infinite patterning".<sup>84</sup> For example, the narratives in the Qur'ân, some of which are repeated or treated antithetically, in a way which assumes that readers were already familiar with the stories and characters,<sup>85</sup> suggests pattern-making. A similar concept could have been used in calligraphy to create a pattern within the text block.

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<sup>81</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 51.

<sup>82</sup> Dodge, *Fihrist*, 20.

<sup>83</sup> Abas and Salman, *Symmetries*, 30.

<sup>84</sup> al-Fârûqî & al-Fârûqî, *Cultural*, 169.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

Calligraphy as pattern is a subtle art. The identification of this subtlety in writing needs a state of relaxed observation, plus visual sensitivity. The eye must be able to function like a telephoto lens, zooming in and out to focus either on small details or on the overall layout. Visually, writing and pattern compete with each other. They are equally demanding and often overlap. Many a time the eye tends to focus only on the writing and to neglect the pattern which is incorporated within the writing itself. In order to be able to see these differences, one has to focus on the total layout of a page. Only by doing that is one able to detect the subtle highlights within the beautiful writing itself. For example, the characteristics of an elongated *nûn* or a slanting *alif* within the text block are natural to the writing itself. But the question as to when and where to stretch the letter *nûn*, and to what extent, within the text block as a whole is something that needs experience as well as special skills on the part of the calligrapher. Areas that are omitted will automatically disrupt the overall flow of the script and thus the desired hidden pattern within the script itself will not emerge. Furthermore, writing as can be seen as another form of pattern-making in the Qur'ân. Even someone who is unable to understand the art of Arabic writing will at least appreciate the pattern-like scripts in the writing itself. This suggests the existence of some strategies in writing which are aimed at reaching below the surface of mere writing and to lead to an appreciation of the Qur'ân itself. Indeed, "Arabic script is the central form of Islam's arts and was the first and is the foremost of its characteristic modes of visual expression".<sup>86</sup> It is the art of the Qur'ân.

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<sup>86</sup> Welch, *Calligraphy*, 22.

### 3. 1. Letters as pattern

"The script should be organised, assembled, lined and edged".<sup>87</sup>

The tradition of using certain letters as patterns in the text block had already existed in late 8th-century or early 9th-century Qur'âns. This can be seen in a single folio in the Khalili collection.<sup>88</sup> The claim that the elongated horizontal or rectangular Qur'ân was due to the nature of the script itself may not necessarily be true.<sup>89</sup> This is because the scribe is always at liberty to experiment with his own unique way of writing. There can be many variants of using angular or cursive scripts for the Qur'ân. The scribe decides when and where to have a certain letter elongated or shortened, so that the whole page becomes active. These letters often function as decorative visual markers in the Qur'ân. There seem to be no specific letters for this function of visual marker. Different scribes have different preferences as well as styles of writing. An example of this can be seen in a 9th-century Qur'ân in the Khalili collection.<sup>90</sup> Certain letters like *lām*, *kāf* and *alif* played a significant role in the organisation of the text. These letters were given particular attention in every line and were well distributed within the text block. The eye tends to focus on these letters which indirectly create movement in the text block. Such indirect movement gives life to the text itself (see

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<sup>87</sup> Al-Qalqashandi, *Subh al-A'sha*. Quoted in Hamad al-Jâsir, *Al-Khatt al-ʿArabî*, tr. Abû Ameenah Bilâl Philips, p.30.

<sup>88</sup> Khalili, KFQ33. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.13.

<sup>89</sup> Déroche, *AT*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Khalili, KFQ68. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.21.

Ill. 1). It makes the page less boring to look at and prolongs the interest as well as the enjoyment of the reader.

The use of letters as pattern in early rectangular Qur'âns (8th-10th centuries) can be easily recognised. This is because of the way the sentence was constructed. Most of these Kufic letters were disjointed. They were written so to speak individually and can be spotted without difficulty. Letters are also arranged to create visual sequences. Such visual sequences in turn create patterns within the text block. But, as for cursive scripts from the 11th century onwards, though this tradition of using letters as pattern-making devices continued to be used in vertical format Qur'âns, the situation is not that simple or straightforward. One may sense a major challenge in the use of letters as pattern in the text block of the Qur'ân. This is because more *âyat* were written on a single page of a Qur'ân in cursive script than on a page of a Kufic oblong Qur'ân.

At least two devices were used to create patterns in the text block. The first worked by emphasising, wherever possible passages in the Qur'ân which were in some way visually complementary, such as clusters of letters. For example, visual stress might be laid on the last one or two letters in an *âyah* if these same letters were repeated at the end of the next *âyah*. On such occasions the sound of the last word in an *âyah* will correspond with the end word of the next *âyah*.<sup>91</sup> The nature of the text itself indirectly helps the scribe to focus on these letters.<sup>92</sup> Thus, sound, vision and mind go hand in hand to create pattern out of letters. In the second device, to underline the use of letters as pattern, illuminated *âyah*-markers are added at the end

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<sup>91</sup> Khalili, QUR60, f. 382b. See James, *AT*, pl.40.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*



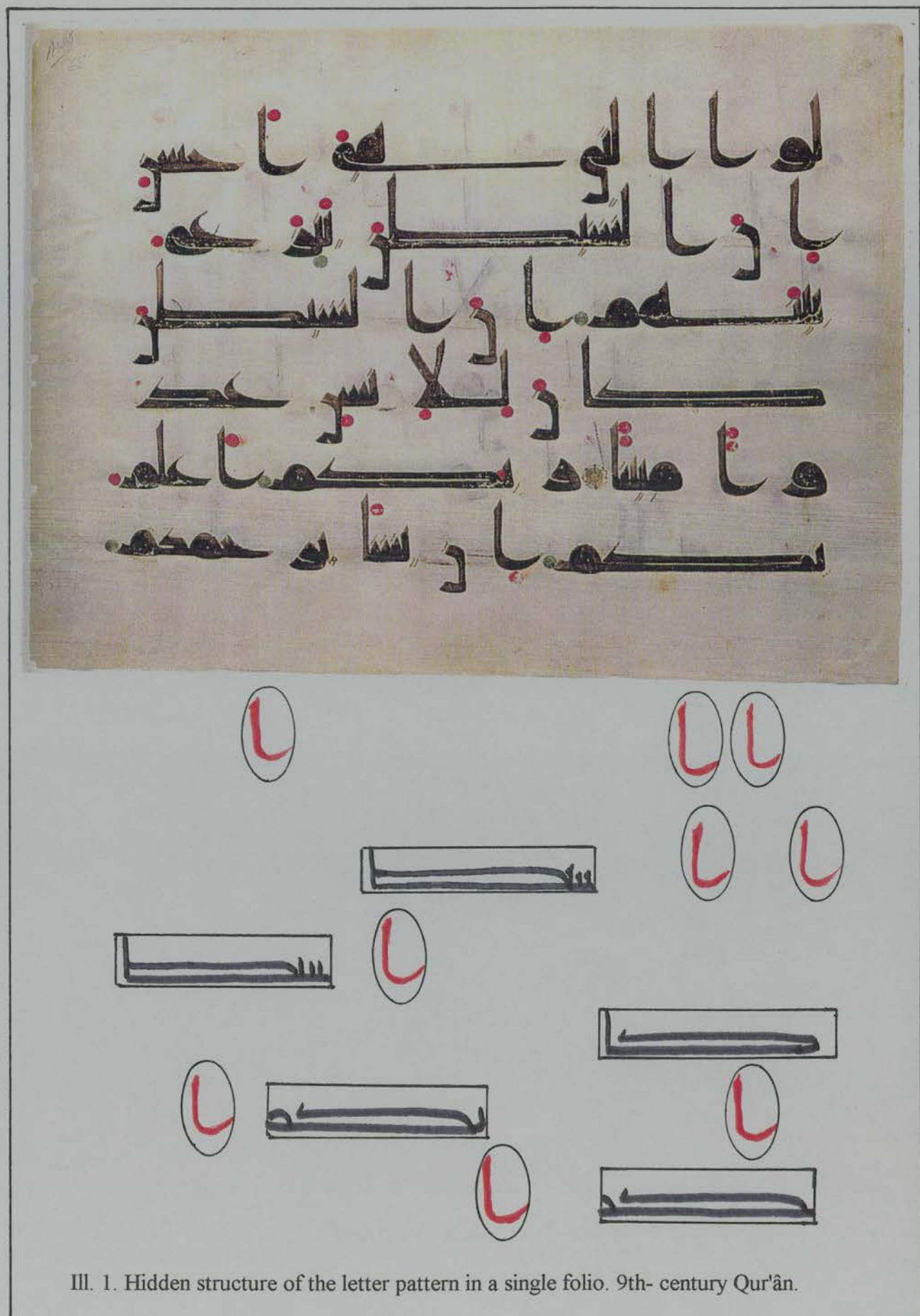
of the *âyah*. These *âyah*-markers are so prominent that the eye will automatically focus on the places where they are situated.<sup>93</sup> They act as visual devices, directing our vision also to register indirect patterns within the text block. Thus *âyah*-markers and letters co-exist to create the pattern desired by the artist. It can be arranged vertically near the inner margin or spine of the Qur'ân; diagonally across the text block; in a zig-zag fashion; or in a horizontal manner within the text block. An example of these can be seen in a fragment of part 12 of a 30-part Qur'ân from Iran, datable ca. 1320-1330 A.D., in the Khalili collection.<sup>94</sup> Another example can be seen 15th-century Qur'ân from Mashhad Shrine Library (see Pl. 12).<sup>95</sup> Here the *âyah*-markers are arranged diagonally from the top right hand corner to almost the bottom left hand corner of the text block. This involves very careful control of the length of individual letters. For example, in order to have these *âyah*-markers arranged in that manner, the letter *yâ'* (see Pl. 12) at the end of the second line has been written vertically — and in defiance of normal calligraphic practice — following the frame of the text block. This is a clear indication of a conscious effort in pattern-making. The flow of the letter *kâf* in the third and fourth lines corresponded with the flow of the letter *lam alif* in the fifth line. One can also detect in this folio other corresponding letters that create letter patterns.

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<sup>93</sup> This system is less obvious in the 8th-10th-century oblong Qur'âns. On the contrary, there are some fine examples of 11th-century Kufic Qur'âns that had already used this system. See Lings, *QACI*, pls. 12-17.

<sup>94</sup> Khalili, QUR474. See James, *MS*, pl. 26.

<sup>95</sup> Mashhad Shrine Library, No. 418. See Lings, *QACI*, pl. 84.



III. 1. Hidden structure of the letter pattern in a single folio. 9th- century Qur'ân.



Pl. 12. A 15th-century Qur'ân from Persia in the Mashhad Shrine Library, No. 418.



### 3. 2. Letters as pattern in Safavid Qur'âns

"Calligraphy is often referred to as *handasat* [*sic*] *al-khatt* (the geometry of line), 'line' meaning 'letters' or 'writing'."<sup>96</sup>

The letter pattern tradition continues to be used in Safavid Qur'âns, but with more sophistication. Several devices were used to create rhythmic patterns out of these letters. In other words, more than one letter can be used to create these rhythmic patterns in the text block and sometimes they overlap each other. The decorative *âyah*-markers also continue to be used in support of the structural layout of the letter pattern. The scribe Husayn al-Fakhkhâr al-Shirâzî used this system of letter distribution in his Qur'ân (see Pl. 13 and illustration 2).<sup>97</sup> In illustration 2, there are at least three groups of letter distribution used within the text block: group A (in yellow), group B (in green) and group C (in orange). Group A consists of the letter *kâf*, group B consists of two jointed letters — *râ'* and *îâ'*; and group C consists of two jointed letters — *râ'* and *hâ'*. Visually, these letters are so prominent that they demand our attention. Their presence clearly suggests either that some form of visual schema is being employed by the artist or that he wrote the letters in a way that pleased him line by line. Thus he sometimes stretched the letters and sometimes compacted them. This brought the page alive. By concentrating on these colours in illustration 2, our eyes systematically tend to follow those same letters within the text block, though the zig-zagging effect is not consistent throughout. Nevertheless, this scheme creates a certain visual balance in the writing itself. Each group of these highlighted letters is rhythmically connected — even if the rhythm varies in pace and

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<sup>96</sup> El-Said and Parman, *Geometric*, 129.

<sup>97</sup> Khalili, QUR422. See James, *AT*, pl.45.



intensity — by means of its repetitive shapes. This is one source of beauty in the pages of a Qur'ân.<sup>98</sup> The yellow (the letter *kâf*), the green (the letters *râ'* and *ṭâ'*) and the orange (the letters *râ'* and *ḥâ'*) colours, either grouped together or spread out, were, it seems, deliberately arranged within the text block for purposes of visual emphasis. One may even detect at times hidden diagonal lines within these groups of letters, which creates a compositional dynamism within the text block. These letter groups tend to divide the text block of this folio into two halves. The first half, that is, from line one to line seven, is visually active with all these three groups of letter patterns. The second half — line eight to line fourteen — though less active in terms of letter patterns, has a different rhythm set up by the *âyah*-markers. These *âyah*-markers act as an added device to balance the composition of the text block. Furthermore, all but four of these *âyah*-markers are painted well within the text block (see dotted vertical lines in Ill. 2).<sup>99</sup> Apparently, then, the copying of the text adhered to the concept of rhythmical emphasis. All this simply reflects a very high level of skill and concentration on the part of the artist. Such a folio is the work of an artist of high calibre in both calligraphy and illumination.

The formula used in these letter patterns is applicable irrespective of the style of writing. An example of this can be seen in the famous *nastā'liq* Qur'ân in the Topkapi Saray Library (see Pl. 8). The slanting script of *nastā'liq* was exploited to display a delicately balanced pattern within the text block. There are at least five letters, notably *bâ'*, *mîm*, *nûn*, *ṣâd* and *kâf*, that were used as balancing elements in

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<sup>98</sup> E. Schroeder, *Persian Miniatures in the Fogg Museum of Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1942), 6.

<sup>99</sup> The convention of spatial order, particularly the zig-zag arrangement of space, had already existed in Timurid miniature paintings. This concept of spatial arrangement or visual order is also found in the Qur'ân. See Muhammad Zain, *Formal Values*, p. 65, ill. 8; and Hillenbrand, "The Uses of Space in Timurid Painting", pp. 76-102.

this *nastā'liq* Qur'ân (see Ill. 3). Basically, these letters depend on the combination of two structural elements, the vertical and the horizontal lines.<sup>100</sup> While it is true for these letters, the same basic structural elements can also be found within the text block. To highlight these balanced hidden structural lines within the text block in Ill. 3, different shapes and colours are used. These hidden structures are closely knitted together by the hidden diagonal, horizontal and vertical lines cutting across each other. Almost all the selected letters are connected diagonally, horizontally and vertically. They interlock harmoniously to form a strong composition and seem almost flawless. The overall impact is none other than a total harmony. The system used in this *nastā'liq* Qur'ân of Shâh Maḥmûd al-Nîshâpûrî was entirely different from that of the Qur'ân copied by Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhâr al-Shîrâzî stated above. The earlier example suggests a certain rhythm in the letter distribution. Nevertheless, the essence in both examples was a perfect harmony and equilibrium<sup>101</sup> in the writing as well as the composition. It reflects the separate stages of decision making for every highlighted letter. As a result, one is likely to find that every page in such a Qur'ân is visually inspiring and aesthetically pleasing.

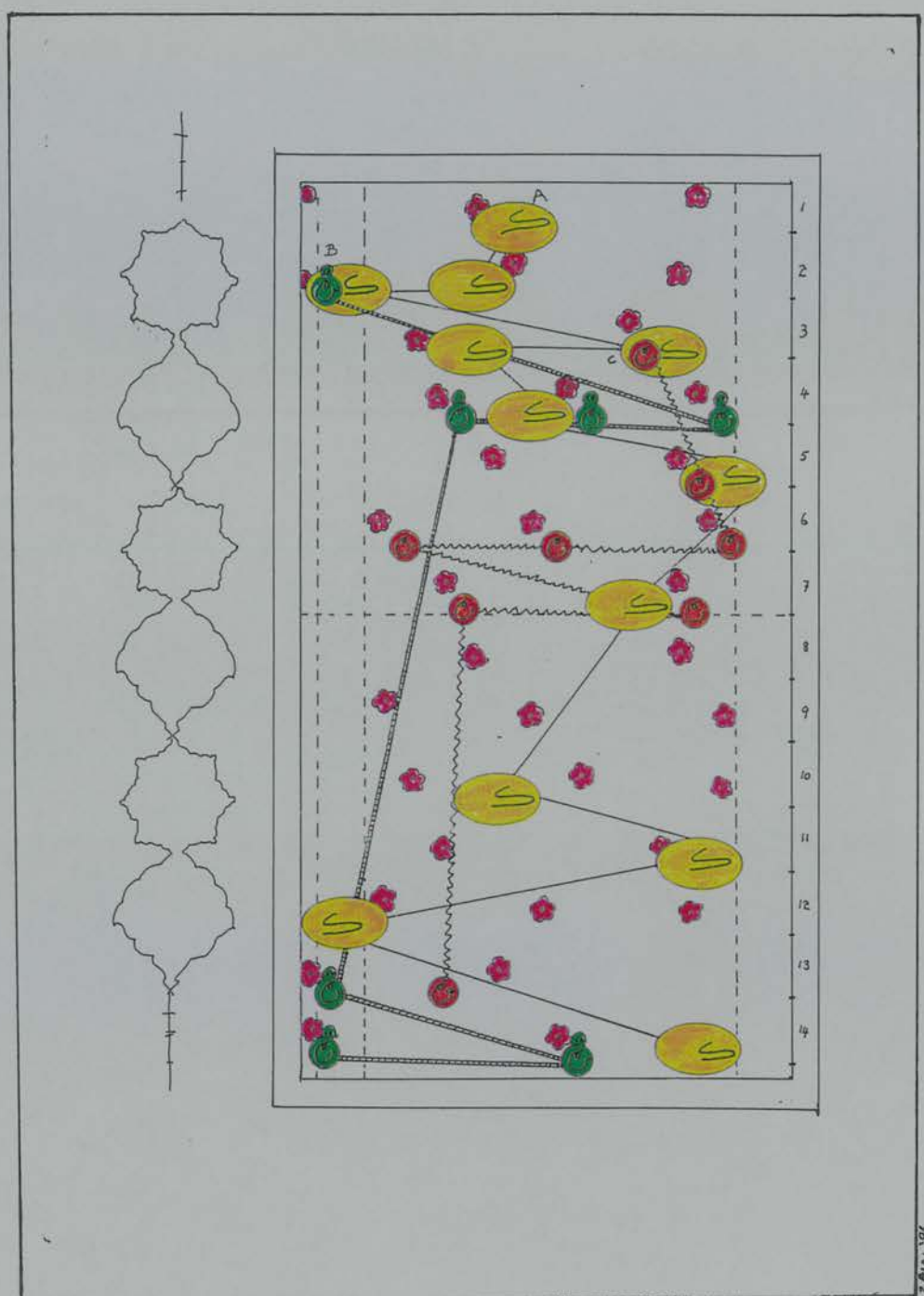
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<sup>100</sup> A. Khatibi & M. Sijelmassi, *The Splendour of Islamic Calligraphy, revised and expanded edition* (New York, 1996), 7.

<sup>101</sup> See Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 116.

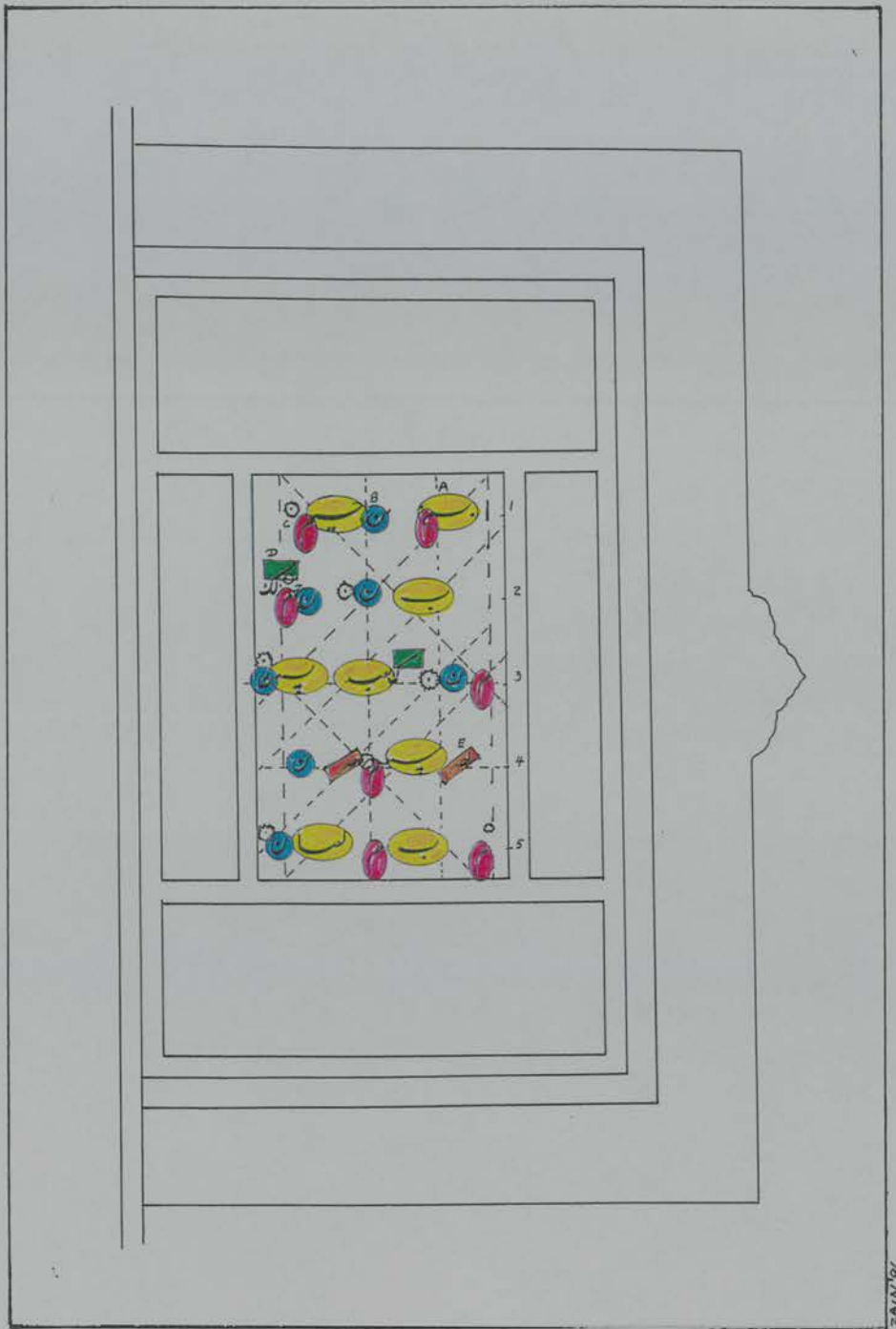
لَهُ نَصْدَى وَمَعْلَيْكَ الْإِيزَكِيُّ وَأَمَّا مَرْجَا لَيْسَعِي  
وَهُوَ نَحْشٌ فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ نَلْفِي كَلَّا إِنَّمَا نَذْكُرُ  
مَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرُ لِي صُفَى مَكْرَمَةٍ مَرْفُوعَةٍ  
مُطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرِي كِرَامِي رِيٍّ قَتْلَ الْإِنْسَانِ  
مَا أَكْفَرُ مِنْ أَيْ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ نُطْقَةٍ خَلَقْتَهُ  
فَقَدْ كُنْتُ تَوَسَّيْتُ لَيْسَعِي تَوَاسَّيْتُ فَاقْبِرْ ثُمَّ إِذَا  
شَاءَ أَفْشَرُ كَلَّا لَمَّا يَفْضُ مَا أَمْسُ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ  
إِلَى طَعَامِهِ أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ  
شَقًّا فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا وَعَبَبْنَا وَقْصًا وَرَبُّونَا  
وَنَحْلًا وَحَدَّائِمْ غَلًّا وَفَارَكْهُ أَبَا مَنَاعَا لَكُمْ  
لِأَنفَامِكُمْ فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاخَّةُ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ  
مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمُّهُ مِنْ أَبِيهِ وَضَاحِيَتُهُ مِنْ يَدِيهِ إِنْ كَلَّ  
أَمْرِي مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَانُ يُغَيِّبُهُ وَيُجِوُّ يَوْمَئِذٍ سَفَرِي  
ضَاحِكُهُ مُسْتَبْشِرٌ وَيُجِوُّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيَّهَا عِبْرِي





III. 2. Letter distribution of a page in a Qur'ân. Copied by Husayn al-Fakhkhâr al-Shîrâzî, dated 972/1564-5 Shîrâz.





Ill. 3. Hidden structure in the letter pattern of a *nastā'liq* Qur'ân. Copied by Shâh Mahmûd al-Nîshâpûrî, dated 945/1538-9 A.D. Probably in Tabriz.

### 3. 3. Script as pattern in the Qur'ân: general considerations

"Writing exists in order to be read."<sup>102</sup>

According to Abû Ḥayyân al-Tawhîdî (d. 400/1010 A.D.),<sup>103</sup> there are seven considerations for good writing. The scripts must be clear; adorned by uprightness; decorated by roundness; ornamented by openings; sharpened by splits; perfected by detailing and distinguished by separation. All these characteristics can be found in the scripts used for Safavid Qur'âns. The focus here is not so much on the individual script but on lines of script which were written in such a way that they created patterns within the text block. In other words, the text was written in an artistic manner stipulated by the hidden layout so as to create patterns within the text block. The first and last considerations outlined by Abû Ḥayyân al-Tawhîdî, that the script must be clear and distinguished by separation, give us some clues as to the possible working procedure employed by Safavid scribes. Similar considerations are laid out in the 16th-century *Epistle* of Maulânâ Sultân ʿAlî on the subject of calligraphy.<sup>104</sup>

It has to be understood that, prior to writing, the general layout of the page must already have been prepared by the artist. Presumably the normal practice was to draw a series of horizontal lines equidistant from each other across the page. But when such standard line vary in size — i.e. become closer together or further apart — a new aesthetic considerations in the arrangement of the script may be assumed. The

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>103</sup> Philips, *Al-Khatt*, 31.

<sup>104</sup> *Op. cit.*, 111.

artist tries to break the existing formula and present a new aesthetic in the art of book production. Aesthetic possibilities were stretched to the limit, extending even to the arrangement of the margins. This affected the size of the script as well as its colours. Thus, other than the usual black script, blue and gold scripts can also be found within the text block. Furthermore, different types of scripts were also used to make the whole composition interesting. All these devices simply aimed at maintaining continuous joy in the reading of a beautiful illuminated Qur'ân.

### 3. 3. 1. 11th-15th centuries

Coloured scripts were only gradually used as devices to decorate the Qur'ân. Before the 11th century, most of the text in Qur'âns was written in black<sup>105</sup> or — much more rarely — in gold Kufic script. An example of a gold Kufic script can be found in a 9th-century Qur'ân in the Khalili collection.<sup>106</sup> Sometimes the gold script was also given a black outline as in the 9th-century Kufic Qur'ân in the Nurosmaniye Mosque Library.<sup>107</sup> In most cases, the text was presented in simple format without any frame.

The period between the 11th-15th centuries saw intense creative activity and experimentation, especially in the presentation of the Qur'ânic text. New concepts in the arrangement of scripts within the text block were introduced. The texts were presented alternately, in different sizes, in different panels and using different colours

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<sup>105</sup> CBL Ms.1422 (Arberry no. 17). See James, *QB*, pl.5.

<sup>106</sup> Khalili, KFAQ53. See Déroche, *AT*, pl.42.

<sup>107</sup> Istanbul, Nurosmaniye Mosque Library, No. 27. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.3.

within the text block. There was no longer a standard style of script for the text. Instead, a combination of two or three different styles of scripts were introduced in a single text block. The most common type of scripts used, as noted above, were *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth*. The artists, while maintaining the exactness required in any copy of this holy text, searched for other means of making the Qur'ân visually interesting.

Coloured scripts also created patterns within the text block. This was done by merely arranging the different-coloured scripts alternately within the text block. The most predominant colours used for the text were black and gold. Scripts coloured other than black had already existed for the Qur'ânic text before the 11th century, but they were only written in a single colour: gold. From the 11th century onwards, the text was presented in two different colours. The first line of the text was written in gold, the second line in black, and the third line in gold again.<sup>108</sup> This system was very popular for at least three centuries (11th-13th centuries). An example of this alternate coloured script (in *thuluth*) that created patterns within the text block is a 12th-century Qur'ân in the Khalili collection. James attributed this Qur'an to eastern Iran.<sup>109</sup> The coloured *thuluth* scripts were written in the same size within a text block without any panels.

By the 14th century, scribes began to vary both their style of writing and the size of the script. This new development was enhanced by using panels that divide up the text block. This panel system was introduced as early as the 14th century. The most common was the five-panel system which formed an interesting pattern for the

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<sup>108</sup> Khalili, QUR 186, folio 7a. See James, *MS*, pl. 4.

<sup>109</sup> Khalili, QUR 186. See James, *MS*, pl. 4.



layout of the text block. In this five-panel system, there are three equal-sized panels for the text, that is, the top, the central and the bottom panels. The script in these panels was bigger than the script in the intervening panels. The smaller scripts are normally written for more than one line. An example of this type of design can be seen in a Qur'ân probably from Shîrâz, datable ca. 1340-1350 A.D., in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 14).<sup>110</sup> This division of text block into panels lasted until the end of the Safavid period.

The 15th century saw a new approach in the presentation of the Qur'ân. Blue scripts were introduced to replace black scripts. In earlier centuries, the scripts were in black and gold, but in the 15th century the preferred scheme for coloured scripts changed to gold and blue. These coloured scripts were also alternately arranged within the text block. Other aspects such as panels, size of scripts and different styles of scripts were still in practice in this century; an Ottoman Qur'ân, datable ca. 1450-1500 A.D., in the Khalili collection, can best illustrate this point (see Pl. 15).<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Khalili, QUR484.1-2. See James, *MS*, pl.32.

<sup>111</sup> Khalili, QUR289 and QUR229. See James, *AT*, pl.20.



Pl. 14. Panel system within the text block of the Qur'ân. Iran, probably Shiraz, ca. 1340-1350 A.D.



Pl. 15. The gold and blue scripts in the text of an Ottoman Qur'ân, ca. 1450-1500 A.D.

### 3. 3. 2. Coloured scripts in Safavid Qur'âns

Safavid Qur'âns show a slightly different arrangement in their use of coloured scripts for the text. The system of three colours — that is, black, gold and blue was still in use for the text of the Qur'ân. Pre-Safavid Qur'âns had always used gold for their first line of script in the text and then followed it by a second line in black. Sometimes blue was also used, as shown in certain 15th-century Qur'âns, to replace black. In Safavid Qur'âns, gold script which hitherto had normally been placed in the top panel, was now placed in the middle panel. Now black script was used for the top panel. This method can be seen in a Qur'ân, datable ca. 1525-1550 A.D., from Tabrîz or Herât, in the Khalili collection (see Pl. 16).<sup>112</sup> At about the same time, another combination of coloured scripts was also introduced in the Safavid Qur'âns.<sup>113</sup> This combination of coloured scripts, arranged within panels, was in the sequence of gold (top panel), black (in between the top and middle panels), blue (middle panel), black (in between the middle and bottom panels) and back to gold (the bottom panel). Furthermore, these scripts also differ in size. The three main panels (top, centre and bottom) contain bigger scripts as compared to the two panels sandwiched between the two gold panels. The style of these scripts also differ. They are in the arrangement of *muhaqqaq*, *naskh*, *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *muhaqqaq*. This can be found in the Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan Muḥammad Tabṣirî Shirâzî, from Shîrâz, datable 1525-1550 A.D., in the Khalili collection.<sup>114</sup> A similar example can be seen in the Chester Beatty

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<sup>112</sup> Khalili, QUR251. See James, *AT*, pl.35.

<sup>113</sup> Khalili, QUR60. See James, *AT*, pl.40.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



Library (see Pl. 17).<sup>115</sup> Here the scribe, date and provenance are not known, Arberry attributed this Qur'ân to the 16th century.

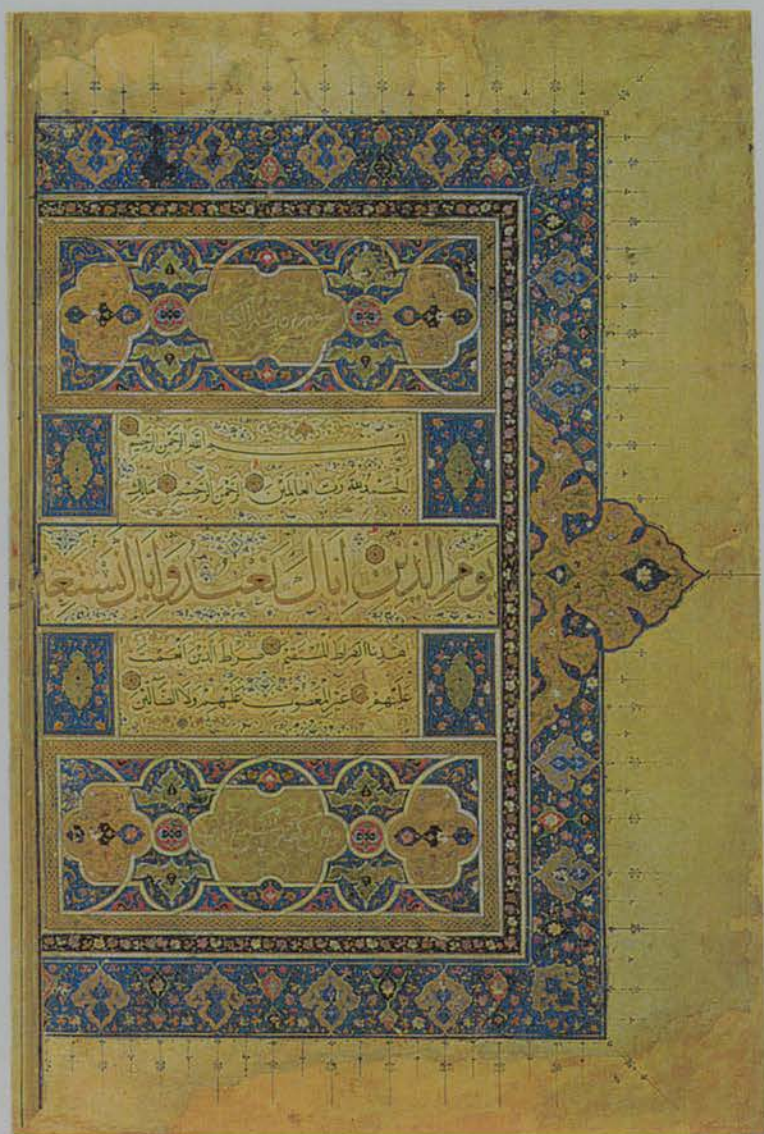
From the second half of the 16th century onwards, the combination of coloured scripts to create patterns within the text block suggested further innovations in the use of colour. This can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥabiballâh al-Kâtib al-Marâghî, datable ca 1560-1570 A.D., in the Khalili collection.<sup>116</sup> James attributes this Qur'ân to Herât or Marâghah. The top and bottom panels sometimes consist of big *muhaqqaq* script in blue. The middle panel consists of big gold *thuluth* script and the two small panels in between them are in small black *naskh* scripts. Hitherto, it seems, it had not been customary for blue script to be written in the first panel; blue and was often used to replace black. In addition, for example in ff. 479b-480a, the *naskh* panels are each horizontally bisected by *sûrah* headings in gold, white or light blue *thuluth*. But in this case, the scribe has mixed the old and the new methods, thus creating one of the most beautiful examples of coloured script patterns and layout. Another example can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Tâqî al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Muṭahhar, dated 982-3/1574-5, in the Chester Beatty Library but, without the *sûrah* headings in the *naskh* panels in this particular folio (see Pl. 18).<sup>117</sup>

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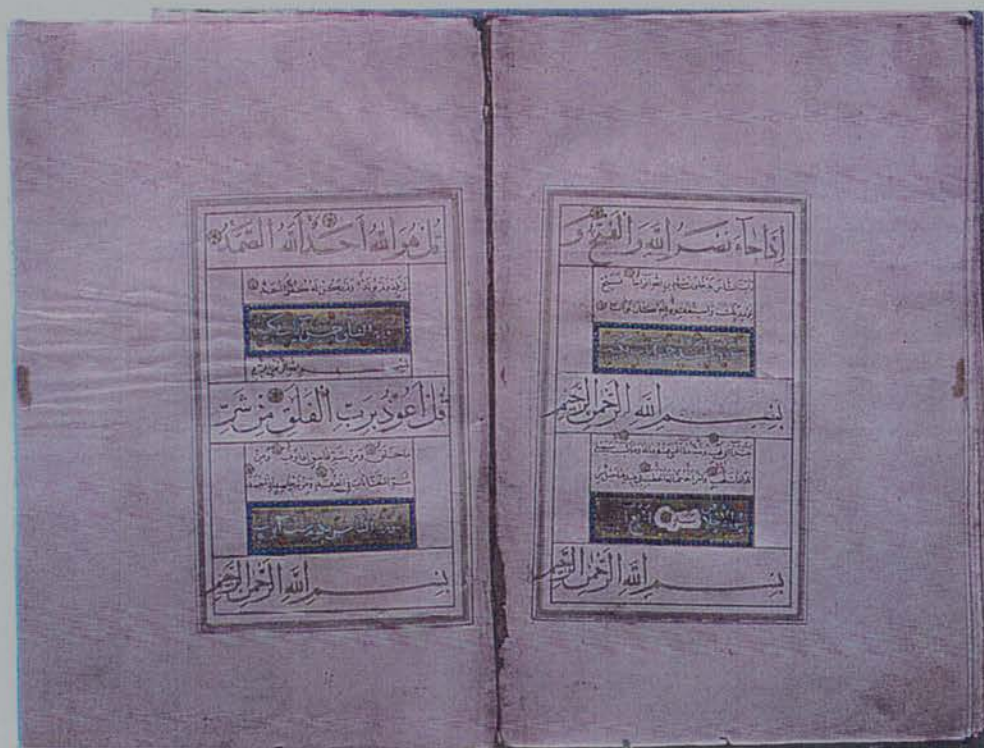
<sup>115</sup> CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).

<sup>116</sup> Khalili, QUR178. See James, *AT*, pl.36.

<sup>117</sup> CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).

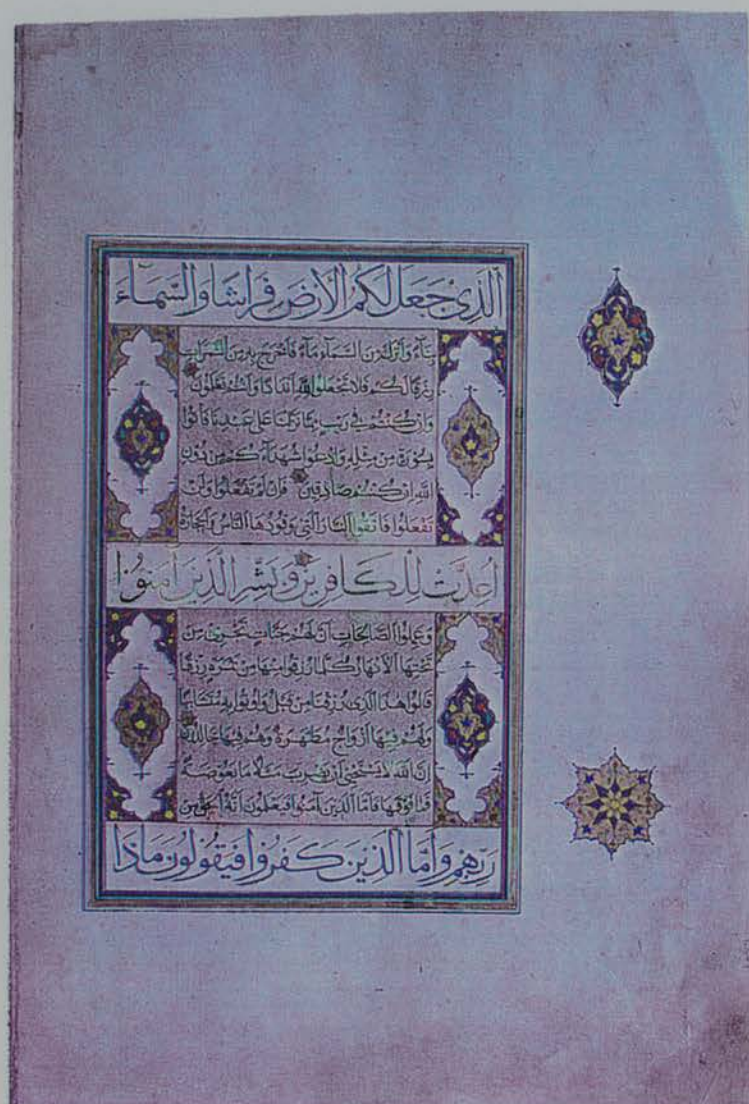


Pl. 16. A single -volume Qur'ân from Herât or Tabrîz, ca. 1525-1550 A.D.



Pl. 17. The panel system within the text block. A 16th-century Qur'ân from Persia.





Pl. 18. The panel system within the text block. A 16th- century Qur'ân from Persia.



#### 4. The decorative background design for the text in the Safavid Qur'âns

Not all backgrounds for the text blocks were decorated. Usually the decorated areas belong to *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2. These two areas are the most decorated areas in the Qur'ân. Almost every inch of these pages was decorated and this also includes the background areas within the text block itself.

The tradition of a decorated background for the text, that is to say within the text block itself began as early as the 11th century.<sup>118</sup> In the period between the 11th and 15th centuries, at least five main types of design for the background of the text block in the Qur'ân had been developed (see Ill. 4. nos. 1-6). One can also identify variants of these five main designs. These five main designs are:

- a. The cloud design.
- b. The floral design.
- c. The three-dot design.
- d. The linear design.
- e. The filigree design.

Designs 'a' to 'd' are mostly found in the rectangular text block format. Design 'e', that is the filigree design, is common only in the "organic" or curvilinear text block (see Ill. 4. no. 6). The most popular design was the cloud design, better known as *abri*<sup>119</sup>. This cloud design was so drawn as to surround the script within the text

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<sup>118</sup> Khalili, QUR87, folios 1b-2a. See James, *MS*, pl.5.

<sup>119</sup> Qâdî Ahmad-Minorsky, *CP*, 178. See Yves Porter, *Studia Iranica* 17/1 (1988), 47-55.

block. It gave a kind of a floating effect to the text. The background to these floating clouds containing text usually has a minutely detailed design. Most often, a combination of both fine floral design and three-dot design are found carefully distributed in the background area. An example can be seen in a Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, datable ca. 1175-1225 A.D. (see Ill. 4. no. 1).<sup>120</sup> This Qur'ân has a rather bold floral design as compared to 13th-century Qur'âns, such as one by Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>simî, dated 681/1282-3 (see Ill. 4. no. 3).<sup>121</sup> As time goes by, the floral design becomes even bolder, as is shown in the Mamlûk Qur'âns, for example in the Qur'ân copied by "Muḥammad ibn...[sic] ibn Ibrâhîm ibn <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Rahmân al-Maydûmî", dated 729/1329 (see Ill. 4. no.4), in the Khalili collection.<sup>122</sup> But by the 15th century, the situation begins to change. The floral design is now much finer, probably reflecting long hours of concentration on the background (see Ill. 4. no. 5). This can be seen in a single-volume Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, probably from Shîrâz or Tabrîz, datable ca. 1475-1500 A.D.<sup>123</sup> The three-dot motif (in black) plus the cloud motif (in a sepia tone) were still in use in this particular Qur'ân, whereas in Ill. 4, nos. 3 and 4, fine vertical or diagonal lines in sepia were drawn in between the bold floral design. Other than these designs, one can also find hatched lines in sepia plus the three-dot design in black painted in the background (see Ill. 4. no. 2).<sup>124</sup> These devices were used to decorate the background of the cloud design with script to give an interesting effect. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 634/1236-7,

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<sup>120</sup> Khalili, QUR87. See James, *MS*, pl.5.

<sup>121</sup> Khalili, QUR29. See James, *MS*, pl.11.

<sup>122</sup> Khalili, QUR317. See James, *MS*, pl.41.

<sup>123</sup> Khalili, QUR128. See James, *AT*, pl.8.

<sup>124</sup> Khalili, QUR704. See James, *MS*, pl.9.

probably from Iraq or Iran, in the Khalili collection. Last but not least is the fine filigree design painted within the text block. This design is commonly found only in the organic or curvilinear text block, such as the flower motif text block or the escutcheon text block. Such a design, appeared in Qur'âns from the beginning of the 15th century onwards.<sup>125</sup> Usually, when such a design was used, the text is not legible; the text and the filigree design intermingle to such an extent that the whole page seems to be only pure design.<sup>126</sup> An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân of which the main body of the text is datable to the 16th century, and which is in the Khalili collection,<sup>127</sup> there is no cloud design in this text.

All the five designs mentioned earlier continue to be used in Safavid Qur'âns (see Ill. 5. nos. 1-10). There are, however, three innovative designs in the decorative backgrounds within the text block of Safavid Qur'âns. These designs are much finer, especially in the floral motif (see Ill. 5. nos. 1, 5, 8 and 10), the floral motif enclosed in a cloud design (see Ill. 5. nos. 2, 3, 4 and 6), and the filigree motif (see Ill 5. nos. 7 and 9). Basically, the cloud motif used for the text continues to be popular in Safavid Qur'âns and is mostly used within the conventional vertical rectangular text block. An example of a Qur'ân that has a fine floral design painted in the background of the text can be seen in the Khalili collection; it is probably from Herât, and is datable ca. 1490-1510 A.D. (see Ill 5. no. 1).<sup>128</sup> The floral motifs are in red and blue with a plain gold background. Another example is in the famous *nastâ'liq* Qur'ân, probably from Tabrîz and dated 945/1538-9, copied by Shâh Maḥmûd al-Nishâpûrî and at present in

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<sup>125</sup> Khalili, QUR642, folios 3b-4a. See James, *AT*, pl.5.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* The first folios are in an obviously Herâtî court style (James, 28).

<sup>128</sup> Khalili, QUR323. See James, *AT*, pl.30.

the collection of the Topkapi Saray library.<sup>129</sup> There is also a 17th-century Safavid Qur'ân, in the Chester Beatty Library, full of nothing but fine floral design in the background of the text.<sup>130</sup>

There are two types of cloud motifs: one that is filled with text and the other filled with floral motifs (see Ill. 5. nos. 2, 3, 4 and 6). The latter design can only be found in the background area of the text block. Each cloud has its own individual floral design. Nevertheless, these cloud designs with floral motifs in them were not a threat to the cloud design that contained the text of the Qur'ân. The text within the cloud design is always dominant. This is due to the plain, unpainted areas between the text and the outlines of the cloud designs. These areas have only the basic colour of the paper and this serves to a small scale to highlight the text within the cloud designs and on a larger scale to make an impact within the overall design of the text block. Typical of this effect is a single-volume Qur'ân, probably from Herât or Tabrîz, datable ca. 1525-1550 A.D., in the Khalili collection (see Ill. 5. no.6).<sup>131</sup> Here the floral motifs within the cloud designs are painted either in blue or in gold, and are well distributed in the background area of the text block.

As for the text block filled with fine filigree design (see Ill. 5. nos. 7 and 9), no cloud motifs were specifically used to envelop the text. This design was widely accepted at the beginning of the second half of the 16th century (see Ill. 5. no. 9).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, HS25, and Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 34. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.91.

<sup>130</sup> CBL Ms. 1550. See Arberry, *Koran Illuminated*, pl.9.

<sup>131</sup> Khalili, QUR251. See James, *AT*, pl.35.

<sup>132</sup> Khalili, QUR231. See James, *AT*, pl.46.

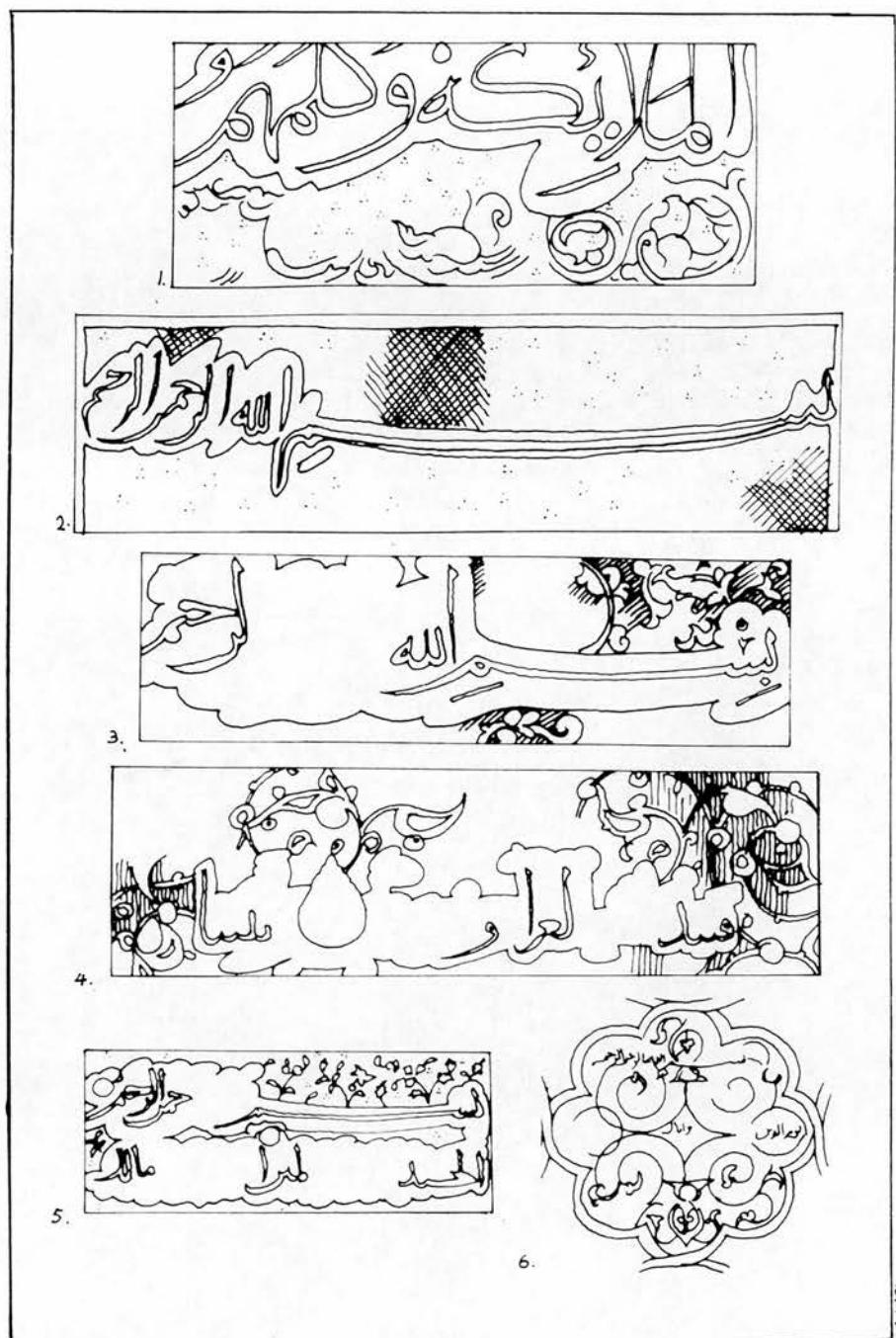


Obviously, there is a limit to such a display, and the artists seem to have adhered to the general concept of book illumination and only worked on the safe area in the Qur'ân, namely *Sûrah* 1. To lavish ornament on this particular *sûrah* is entirely acceptable, for this text is the most widely known text in the Qur'ân, and is frequently recited in prayers as well as in religious ceremonies. Fine filigree designs are sometimes used at the beginning of *Sûrah* 2,<sup>133</sup> but they are separated from the text by means of a cloud motif. Artists were not, it seems, willing to give this section of the Qur'ân the same treatment as *Sûrah* 1, probably because *Sûrah* 2 is not as widely memorised as *Sûrah* 1. An example of this filigree design functioning as a decorative background for the text, can be seen in the special treatment of the *Fâtihah* on folios 3b and 4a in a single-volume Qur'ân in the Khalili collection, from Shîrâz and datable ca. 1525-1550 A.D.<sup>134</sup>

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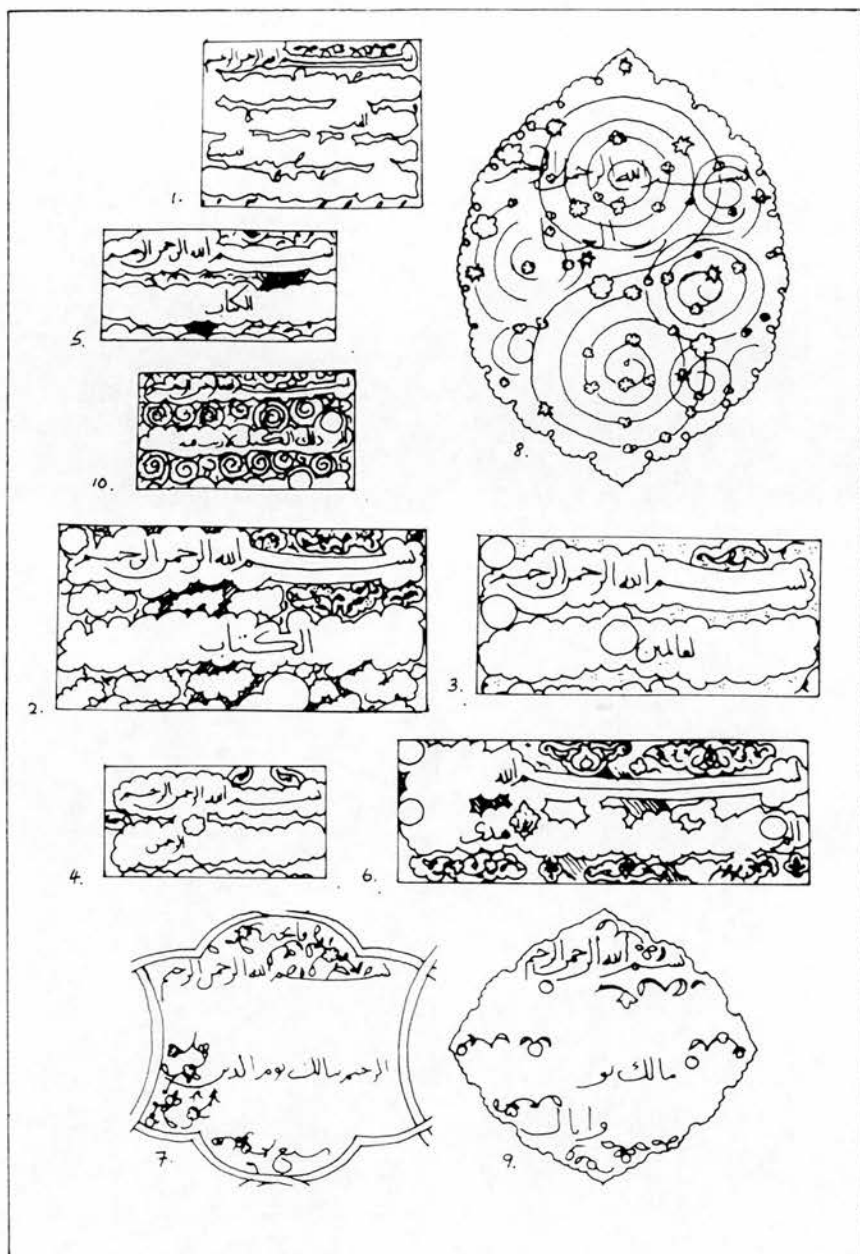
<sup>133</sup> Khalili, QUR441. See James, *AT*, pl.41.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*



III. 4. nos. 1-6. Background designs for Qur'ânic texts (11th-15th centuries).

1. Qur'ân. North Western Iran, ca. 1175-1225 A.D. Khalili, QUR87.
2. Qur'ân. Iraq or Iran, 634/1236-7. Khalili, QUR704.
3. Qur'ân. Iraq. Probably Baghdad. Dated 681/1282-3. Khalili, QUR29.
4. Qur'ân. Copied by Muhammad ibn... ibn...Ibrahim ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdal Rahmân al-Maydumi. Mamlûk. Cairo. Dated 729/1329. Khalili, QUR317.
5. Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Tabrîz, ca 1475-1500 A.D. Khalili, QUR128.
6. Qur'ân. Herât, ca 1430-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR642.



III. 5. nos. 1-10. Background designs for text in Safavid Qur'âns.

1. Qur'ân. Herât, ca. 1490-1510 A.D. Khalili, QUR323.
2. Qur'ân. Herât or Tabriz, ca. 1500-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR56.
3. Qur'ân. Herât. Dated 967/1559-60. Khalili, QUR3.
4. Qur'ân. Copied by (Nûr al-Dîn) Muhammad Husayn ibn Muhyi ('I-Dîn) al-Harâwi. Bukhara or Herât. Dated 944/1537-8. Khalili, QUR114.
5. Qur'ân. Iran. 16th century A.D. Khalili, QUR130.
6. Qur'ân. Herât or Tabriz, ca. 1525-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR251.
7. Qur'ân. Copied by Ruzbihan (Muhammad) al-Tabi<sup>c</sup>i al-Shîrâzi. Shîrâz. Dated 952/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111.
8. Qur'ân. Shîrâz, ca 1525-1550 A.D. Khalili, QUR441.
9. Qur'ân. Shîrâz or Qazwîn. 16th century A.D. QUR231.
10. Qur'ân. Probably Herât, ca 1600 A.D. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985. Lot 34.

#### 4. 1. Coloured panels for the Qur'ânic text

The desire to create pattern within the text block in Safavid Qur'âns went to the extent of using different colours for the panels of the text. This can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty collection, copied by Ruzbihan Muḥammad al-Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>î al-Shîrâzî (see Pl. 19).<sup>135</sup> Here the three panels (top, middle and bottom) that contain bigger script are usually painted in the same colour, or at least in the same tone. For example, the top and bottom panels are painted in blue while the middle panel is in a lighter tone of blue. In between these three panels, the two panels at the centre are painted in gold. Other combination of colours used within these panels can also be found.<sup>136</sup> The basic formula is always the same. The top and bottom panels, and sometimes even the middle panel, will have the same colour so as to differentiate them from the two panels at the centre. The two panels at the centre which usually comprise smaller scripts, are painted in the same colour. These combinations of background colour help to create a kind of colour pattern within the text block. This method of illumination is typical of Safavid Qur'âns.

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<sup>135</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry No. 156). See Arberry, *Koran Illuminated*, pl.8.

<sup>136</sup> Khalili, QUR231, f. 3a. See James, *AT*, pl.46.





Pl. 19. Coloured panels for the text. Safavid Qur'ân.

## 5. Preliminary conclusion

The most important visual aspect of the Qur'ân is the writing itself. Decorative aspects or illumination of the Qur'ân came later. Basically, Arabic scripts can be divided into two main forms: angular and rounded scripts. The angular script is generally known as Kufic script, which was the script of choice in pre-11th-century Qur'âns, while certain types of rounded or cursive scripts, which eventually came to include *muhaqqaq*, *naskh*, *rayhân*, *riqâ'*, *tawqî'* and *thuluth*, began to be used for Qur'âns from the beginning of the 11th century. Of these six major types of cursive scripts, *muhaqqaq*<sup>137</sup> was perhaps the most commonly used for the text of the Qur'ân.<sup>138</sup> Besides Qur'âns using a single script, however, there are also Qur'âns that use combinations of different types of scripts. Typical two-script combinations (11th-14th centuries) include *muhaqqaq* and *rayhân*,<sup>139</sup> *muhaqqaq* and *naskh*,<sup>140</sup> *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth*,<sup>141</sup> and *rayhân* and *thuluth*.<sup>142</sup> Three-script Qur'âns combining *naskh*, *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth*<sup>143</sup> are also known. Still other scripts are used for *sûrah* headings. By the 15th century, the *muhaqqaq* script had become less popular and were gradually replaced by the *naskh* script. The technique of combining

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<sup>137</sup> CBL Ms. 1471. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.41.

<sup>138</sup> In a survey conducted on 109 Qur'âns (11th-14th centuries), 50% of these Qur'âns are in *muhaqqaq*, 29% in *naskh*, 17% in *rayhân*, 5% in *thuluth* and 0% in *riqâ'* and *tawqî'*.

<sup>139</sup> A 14th-century Qur'ân in the Khalili collection (QUR473). See James, *MS*, pl.22.

<sup>140</sup> Khalili, QUR807. See James, *MS*, pl.43.

<sup>141</sup> Khalili, QUR580. See James, *MS*, pl.42.

<sup>142</sup> Khalili, QUR832. See James, *MS*, pl.25.

<sup>143</sup> Khalili, QUR850. See James, *MS*, pl.40.

scripts also shows a slightly different arrangement. In a typical page of the two-script technique, the first line is *naskh*, followed by *muhaqqaq*,<sup>144</sup> whereas the three-script technique consists of *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*<sup>145</sup> in that order.

The most popular scripts used during the Safavid period are, in that order, *naskh* (58%), *muhaqqaq* (5%) and *nastā'liq* (1%). Apparently, Shâh Tahmâsp learned these scripts in his youth. In the survey conducted, there is no *muhaqqaq* script Qur'ân found in the 17th century. The tradition of using scripts in combination for the text continued to be used in Safavid Qur'âns, but these were innovatively executed in slightly different techniques. There are four types of two-script techniques used by Safavid artists. They are: *naskh* and *thuluth*; *muhaqqaq* and *naskh*; *thuluth* and *tawqîc*; and *rayhân* and *naskh*.<sup>146</sup> Of these four, the *naskh* and *thuluth* combination was the most favoured.<sup>147</sup> There was also a combination of three scripts for the text found in the Safavid Qur'âns. These scripts are the *muhaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*,<sup>148</sup> and *naskh*, *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth*, in that sequence. Only one Qur'ân found to echo 15th century Qur'ân that is in the arrangement of *naskh*, *muhaqqaq* and *thuluth* scripts.<sup>149</sup> The three-script combination seems less popular at the turn of the 17th century.

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<sup>144</sup> Khalili, QUR128. See James, *AT*, pl.8.

<sup>145</sup> Khalili, QUR95. See James, *AT*, pl.7.

<sup>146</sup> See 2.4.3 in this Chapter.

<sup>147</sup> See CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).

<sup>148</sup> Khalili, QUR178. See James, *AT*, pl.36.

<sup>149</sup> CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162).

Another aspect is the transformation of letters into patterns within the text block. Letters as pattern operate in a very subtle way within the text block; for example, by repeatedly stretching the letter *nūn* the scribe indirectly creates an interesting pattern within the text block. Certain selected letters reveal hidden structures such as zig-zag, diagonal; vertical and horizontal lines or a combination of them. There are also two other devices used to help create patterns within the text block. These work on occasion by focusing on the rhythmic end sound of *āyāt* which end with similar sounds and by the placement of the illuminated *āyah*-markers. This tradition had existed before the Safavid period, but in Safavid times, these formulae were used with greater sophistication. All these devices were well planned so that they balance and counter-balance each other as patterns within the text block.

The arrangement of different types of coloured scripts also created pattern. This arrangement is closely related to the layout of the text block. Pre-11th-century Qur'āns were written in script of a single colour black or gold. The format was simple. The period between the 11th and 15th centuries produced some new concepts of pattern-making through writing. The text was alternately written in different colours, different sizes and in different panels within the text block. For example, the first line was executed in gold, the second line in black and the third line in gold again. This formula was popular for at least three centuries (11th-13th centuries). By the 14th century onwards, a five-panel system was introduced with different sizes and styles of writing. In this arrangement, the top, middle and bottom panels contain bigger scripts, while the panels at the centre contain smaller scripts. Blue scripts for the text of the Qur'ān were introduced probably at the beginning of the 15th century.<sup>150</sup> Safavid Qur'āns used a slightly different approach in their coloured

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<sup>150</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.20.



scripts. The gold script was written in the middle panel and the black script in the top panel. Another approach favours writing the text in the top and bottom panels in gold, the text in the middle panel blue and that of all the other panels in smaller black scripts.<sup>151</sup> The arrangement of these scripts is as follows *muhaqqaq* (top panel), *naskh* (upper central panel), *muhaqqaq* (middle panel), *naskh* (lower central panel) and *muhaqqaq* (bottom panel).<sup>152</sup>

Another interesting aspect is the way that the decorative elements support the scripts within the text block. This tradition started in 11th-century Qur'âns with five different designs. They are: a) the cloud design, b) the floral design; c) the three-dot design; d) the linear design and e) the filigree design. Designs 'a' to 'd' are commonly found in a rectangular text block, whereas design 'e' is only common in the organic, curvilinear or escutcheon text block. At first these designs were rather bold, but they gradually became very fine from the 15th century<sup>153</sup> onwards. Hence, the emergence of the fine filigree design within the text block in this particular century. Safavid artists improved these designs by introducing a much finer floral motifs,<sup>154</sup> the cloud with floral motifs in it and the filigree motif. The floral motifs drawn within the cloud designs were painted in blue as well as in gold. There are two types of cloud design within the text block of Safavid Qur'âns, one for the text itself and the other for the floral motifs. Safavid Qur'âns with filigree designs normally have no cloud design for the text. Besides these decorative elements, Safavid artists also introduced different colours for the background panels of scripts. This technique further enhances the

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<sup>151</sup> CBL, Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156)

<sup>152</sup> CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158).

<sup>153</sup> Khalili, QUR128. See James, *AT*, pl.8.

<sup>154</sup> Khalili, QUR441. See James *AT*, pl.41.

decorative effect of these illuminated pages. All the above methods were deliberately formulated to create patterns within the text block. Safavid artists exploited numerous visual possibilities in the enhancement of the text block in their Qur'âns. The script is of course of the utmost importance in maintaining the reader's focus on the text. Other elements surrounding the text simply support and beautify the text block.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The definition of the Safavid style and its relation to Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns.**

#### **1. The setting**

##### **1.1. Securely dated and/or provenanced Qur'âns**

##### **1.2. The case of illuminated Qur'âns**

#### **2. Documentary evidence**

#### **3. Formal considerations**

##### **3.1. Colours**

##### **3.2 Frame formats**

##### **3.3. Text blocks**

##### **3.4. *Unwâns***

##### **3.5. Scripts**

##### **3.6. The *âyah*-markers**

###### **3.6.1. The placement of *âyah*-markers**

###### **3.6.2. Repetitive designs in *âyah*-markers**

###### **3.6.3. Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal *âyah*-markers**

##### **3.7. Marginal designs**

##### **3.8. Plant motifs and the cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh***

#### **4. Preliminary Conclusion**

## The definition of Safavid style and its relations to Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns

### 1. The setting

In the production of illuminated Qur'âns, the period between the 16th and the 17th centuries was very active. Inter-regional artistic connections between the three great empires of the Islamic world — the Safavid, the Ottoman and the Mughal<sup>1</sup> — are common. The constant turmoil in social and political factors during the Safavid period caused an escalating emigration of Safavid masters from art centres such as Tabrîz to the capitals of the neighbouring Ottoman and Mughal empires. The fall of the Akkonyunlu state in 1501 had created two types of emigration of these masters to the Ottoman capital. One was the voluntary emigration of masters in search of better prospects. The other involved the migration of artists as part of booty, for example in the course of Selim I's conquest of Tabrîz after 920/1514.<sup>2</sup> Tabrîz was more than once in Ottoman hands in the 16th century.<sup>3</sup> The Ottomans also saw themselves as heirs to the culture of Timurid central Asia.<sup>4</sup> In the first half of the 16th century, the Ottomans had drawn masters from all corners of the empire, from Timurid artists in Tabrîz (who also included, from earlier conquests, artists from Herât and Shîrâz) to Mamlûk artists from Syria and Egypt.<sup>5</sup> Individual styles from different centres were

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<sup>1</sup> Lings, *QACI*, 189.

<sup>2</sup> E. Atil, *The Age of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent* (New York, 1987), 31.

<sup>3</sup> W. Blunt, *Splendours of Islam* (London, 1976), 126.

<sup>4</sup> J. M. Rogers and R. M. Ward, *Suleyman the Magnificent* (London, 1988), 29.

<sup>5</sup> Atil, *Sultan Suleyman*, 31. See Rogers and Ward, *Suleyman*, 59.



absorbed in the Ottoman workshops to produce Qur'âns which are typical of the empire.

A similar process operated in the case of the Mughals. The exiled prince Humâyûn saw the declining interest of Shâh Tahmâsp in his artists<sup>6</sup> as an opportunity to recruit these masters from Tabrîz to form his own royal workshop. Humâyûn brought Mîr Sayyid ʿAlî<sup>7</sup> and ʿAbd al-Şamad<sup>8</sup> back with him to Kabul in 956/1549 and later to India.<sup>9</sup> Other Persian masters that can be found in the imperial Mughal studio include Aqa Riza of Herât (an Isfâhân-trained painter)<sup>10</sup> and his son Abu'l Hassan,<sup>11</sup> and Mullâ Fakhr (a bookbinder from Tabrîz).<sup>12</sup> The credentials of these masters to enter the royal Mughal workshop varied according to their specialisation. ʿAbd al-Şamad,<sup>13</sup> in particular, had as his credentials to join Humâyûn's workshop his

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<sup>6</sup> M. C. Beach, *Early Mughal Painting* (London, 1987), 8.

<sup>7</sup> For the personality of Mîr Sayyid ʿAlî, see A. Okada, in her chapter on "The Persian Tradition", in *Indian Miniatures of The Mughal Court*, tr. Deke Dusinberre (New York, 1992), pp. 62-68.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 68-72.

<sup>9</sup> J. M. Rogers, *Mughal Miniatures* (London, 1993), pp. 30-31. See Beach, *Early*, pp. 8-9; K. Chaitanya, *A History of Indian Painting: Manuscript, Moghul and Deccani Traditions* (New Delhi, 1979), 40; and S. C. Welch, A. Schimmel, M. L. Swietochowski and W. M. Thackston, *The Emperor's Album: Images of Mughal India, The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1987), 14.

<sup>10</sup> According to Rogers, Aqa Riza entered Akbâr's workshop in 1584. See Rogers, *Mughal*, 78.

<sup>11</sup> P. Pal, *Court Painting of India : 16th-19th Centuries* (New York, 1983), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Rogers, *Mughal*, 33.

<sup>13</sup> ʿAbd al-Şamad was both the teacher and administrator in the Akbâri studio. See L. Y. Leach, *Indian Miniature Paintings and Drawings: The Cleveland Museum of Art, Catalogue of Oriental Art, Part One* (Ohio, 1986), 31.

illumination of *Sûrah al-Ikhlâs*, the last chapter in the Qur'ân.<sup>14</sup> This clearly confirms that an illuminated Qur'ân was always regarded as the supreme art form in the Islamic world. The nature of the Mughal workshop was quite similar to that of the royal Safavid workshop.<sup>15</sup> Its membership comprised both Safavid and local masters. In the period between the reign of Humâyûn (1550-56 A.D.) and the reign of Aurangzeb (1659-1707 A.D.), there is recorded the employment of 213 Hindus and 184 Muslims in the Mughal imperial workshop.<sup>16</sup> In the early period of this workshop Safavid idioms were assimilated into the local art,<sup>17</sup> but after the death of Humâyûn, the gradual disappearance of the Safavid style is manifest.<sup>18</sup> The combined efforts of all these masters gradually formed the Mughal style,<sup>19</sup> especially during the reign of Akbâr.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rogers, *Mughal*, 33. See Blunt, *Splendours*, 141.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. See J. P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India* (London, 1982), 16.

<sup>16</sup> S. P. Verma, *Mughal Painters and Their Work: A Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue* (Bombay, 1994), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Chaitanya, *Indian*, 53.

<sup>18</sup> Rogers, *Mughal*, 40.

<sup>19</sup> Pal, *Court*, 8. See S. C. Welch, *Art of Mughal India* (New York, 1976), 12; Beach, *Early*, 3; and Leach, "Mughal Painting from Akbar through Shâh Jahan" in *Indian Miniature*, pp. 10-29.

<sup>20</sup> M. C. Beach, *The Grand Mogul: Imperial Painting in India 1600-1660* (Massachusetts, 1978), 20.

### 1.1. Securely dated and/or provenanced Qur'âns

In order to avoid a dangerous circularity in the arguments that will be employed in this chapter it will be convenient to list here the known Qur'âns of specific 16th-17th century date and provenance. These are as follows:

#### a). Safavid

##### 16th century

1. Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh. Dated 915/1509. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 252.
2. Qur'ân, owned by Jalâl al-Dîn Muḥammad. Dated 934/1527. Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 255.
3. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Shîrâzî. Dated 943-4/1536-7. Christie's, 24 April 1990, lot 167.
4. Qur'ân copied by (Nûr al-Dîn) Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Muḥyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harawî. Bukhârâ or Herât. Dated 944-5/1537-8. Khalili, QUR114.
5. Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>c</sup>î al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâz. Dated 952-3/1545-6. Khalili, QUR111.
6. Qur'ân, Shîrâz or Qazwin. Dated 960/1552. Khalili, QUR729.
7. Qur'ân copied by Husayn al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâzî. Dated 961/1553. Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.
8. Qur'ân copied by Maqşûd <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Sharîf al-Tabrîzî al-Maftulband and illuminated by Bâbâ al-Tabrîzî. Dated 962/1554. CBL Ms. 1540.
9. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manşûr al-Ḥusainî (Mîr Munshi). Bukhârâ. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 8 July 1980, lot 273 & 274.
10. Qur'ân copied by Aḥmad ibn Ni<sup>c</sup>matallâh. Herât. Dated 967-8/1559-60. Khalili, QUR3.

11. Qur'ân copied by Asadullâh ibn Muḥammad al-Kashânî. Dated 967/1560.  
Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.
12. Qur'ân copied by (Jamâl al-Dîn) Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâz. Dated 972/1564-5. Khalili QUR422.
13. Qur'ân copied by Muzaffâr ibn Ahmad ibn Muzaffar ibn Kamâl ibn <sup>c</sup>Iwad ibn Muzaffar ibn Shams al-Dîn Hassan Amirah ibn Nasir al-Dîn Muḥammad al-Tûsî. Dated 972-3/1564-5. Khalili, QUR63.
14. Qur'ân copied by Nizâm al-Dîn Majmûd. Dated 975-6/1567-8. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).
15. Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh ibn Sulṭân Muḥammad al-Harâwî. Dated 975/1567. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 320.
16. Qur'ân copied by Muhammad Qâsim ibn Malik Husain Tûnî. Dated 975/1567. Christie's, 22 October 1992, lot 243.
17. Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqaddam. Dated 979/1571. Khalili, QUR625.
18. Qur'ân copied by Maḥmûd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh ibn <sup>c</sup>Alî al-Ghafarî. Dated 980/1572. Sotheby's, 15 April 1985, lot 209.
19. Qur'ân copied by Tâqî al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Muṭahhar. Dated 982-3/1574-5. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155).
20. Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî ibn Muḥammad Muqaddam. Karbala. Dated 993/1585. Khalili, QUR96.
21. Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî Riza al-<sup>c</sup>Abbâsî. Qazwîn. Dated 995/1586-7. Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69.
22. Qur'ân copied by Nowruz Muḥammad b. <sup>c</sup>Abdul-Bâqî al-Bukhârî. Bukhârâ. Dated 999/1590. Sotheby's, 15 April 1985, lot 210.
23. Qur'ân, dated 1005/1596. Sotheby's, 14 April 1976, lot 253.



## 17th century

1. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Meḥdî al-Kâtib al-Mashhadî. Dated 1011/1602.  
Sotheby's, 6 June 1985, lot 35.
2. Qur'ân copied by ʿImâd al-Dîn Hassan ibn Ibrâhîm. Dated 1036-7/1626-7.  
Christie's, 11 June 1986, lot 88.
3. Qur'ân copied by ʿImâd al-Dîn Hasan. Shîrâz. Dated 1042/1632. Sotheby's, 14  
December 1987, lot 232.
4. Qur'ân copied by ʿAbu Muḥammad Ibrâhîm Shîrâzî. Dated 1068-9/1657-8.  
Christie's, 24 April 1990, lot 168.
5. Qur'ân, dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.
6. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Zaman al-Ḥusainî al-Kirmânî. Dated 1076-7/1665-6.  
Christie's, 27 April 1993, lot 34.
7. Qur'ân copied Aqa Muḥammad ibn Ziyad al-Dîn al-Marâghî. Dated 1083-4/1672-  
3. Christie's, 23 April 1991, lot 65.
8. Qur'ân, dated 1084/1673. CBL Ms. 1554.
9. Qur'ân copied by Mîrza Aḥmad. Dated 1096/1684. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no.  
173).
10. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî. Dated 1096-7/1684-5. Christie's,  
12 April 1988, lot 72.
11. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Hâshîm (al-Tayir). Dated 1100/1688. Sotheby's, 15  
October 1984, lot 260.
12. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî. dated 1101/1689. Sotheby's, 7  
April 1975, lot 193.
13. Qur'ân copied by Aḥmad al-Nirîzî. Dated 1108/1696. Isfâhân. Christie's, 16  
October 1980, lot 31.
14. Qur'ân, copied by Aḥmad al-Nirîzî. Illuminated by ʿAbd Allâh ibn Muṭṭalib  
Mustaufî al-Shîrâzî. Dated 1125/1713. CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry no. 177).

15. Qur'ân copied by Mîrza Aḥmad al-Tabrîzî. Dated 1136/1723-4. Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 105.

**b). Ottoman**

**16th century**

1. Qur'ân copied by Muṣṭafa ibn Naṣûḥ al-Selânikî. Dated 912/1506-7. Khalili, QUR429. James, *AT*, pl.55.
2. Qur'ân, dated 938/1531-2. Khalili, QUR82. James, *AT*, pl.54.
3. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullâh al-Nishâpûrî. Dated 948/1541. Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.
4. Qur'ân copied by Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafa Dede ibn Hamdullâh. Istanbul, dated 958/1551. Khalili, QUR533. James, *AT*, pl.57.
5. Qur'ân copied by ʿAbdullâh al-Qirîmî, dated 973/1565-6. Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 63.
6. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Raḥmân al-Maghluwî. Dated 973/1565. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.
7. Qur'ân copied by Iskandar ibn ʿAbdullâh. Dated 976/1568. Sotheby's, 13 October 1981, lot 275.
8. Qur'ân, dated 983/1575. Sotheby's, 13 October 1980, lot 138.
9. Qur'ân, copied by Dâwûd ibn ʿAbdullâh, dated 985/1577. Khalili, QUR214. James, *AT*, pl.60.
10. Qur'ân copied by ʿAbdul ʿAlî Muḥammad Turbatî. Dated 986/1578. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 31.
11. Qur'ân copied by Ḥassan. Dated 996/1587. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.
12. Qur'ân copied by Maḥmûd ibn ʿAbd al-Walî al-Daftarî. Dated 1000/1591. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44.

13. Qur'ân copied by Khan Aḥmad °Aṣrî. Dated 1001/1592. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 322.
14. Qur'ân copied by Dervish Muḥammad. Dated 1007/1598. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 92.

### 17th century

1. Qur'ân, dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 17 October 1983, lot 289.
2. Qur'ân copied by Muṣṭafâ ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî. Dated 1055/1645. Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.
3. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî. Dated 1070-1/1659-60. Christie's, 10 October 1991, lot 50.
4. Qur'ân copied by Dervish °Alî. Dated 1073/1662. Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 347.
5. Qur'ân copied by Ḥâfîz °Uṭhmân. Dated 1082/1671. Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.
6. Qur'ân copied by °Abdullâh ibn Muṣṭafâ. Dated 1087/1676. Sotheby's, 17 October 1983, lot 290.
7. Qur'ân copied by Darvish Maḥmûd Ibn Bairam, dated 1091-2/1680-1. Christie's, 25 November 1985, lot 132.
8. Qur'ân copied by Ḥâfîz ibn °Alî. Dated 1099/1687. Christie's, 1 April 1982, lot 161.
9. Qur'ân copied by Ibn Qâsim °Alî Muḥsin al-Nishâpûrî. Dated 1099/1687. Sotheby's, 15 April 1985, lot 225.
10. Qur'ân copied by Ismâ°îl Wahbî. Dated 1106-7/1694-5. Christie's, 24 November 1993, lot 102.
11. Qur'ân copied by Ḥusain ibn Ramaḍân, a student of Darvish °Alî al-Imâm. Dated 1125/1713-4. Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 79.

12. Qur'ân copied by Muṣṭafâ al-Ḥilmî, dated 1214/1719. Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.
13. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ʿÂrif al-Rajāʾî, dated 1174/1760. Christie's 24 April 1980, lot 96.
14. Qur'ân copied by Sayyid Muḥammad al-Shâkir during the reign of Selim Khan. Illuminated by Al-Hajj Ḥâfîẓ Muḥammad Nûrî'. Dated 1208/1793-4. Christie's, 28 November 1983, lot 105.

### **c). Mughal**

#### **16th century**

1. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Mansûr al-Ḥusainî. Dated 966/1558. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

#### **17th century**

1. Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî, North India, dated 1037/1627. Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.
2. Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî, dated 1092/1681. Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.
3. Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî, dated 1100/1688-9. Christie's 22-23 November 1984, lot 120.
4. Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd. Dated 1100/1688. Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 107.
5. Qur'ân, North Indian, dated 1162/1748. Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 44.



## 1.2. The case of the illuminated Qur'âns

The period between 1500 and 1700 is perhaps the most challenging of all in the study of illuminated Qur'âns. This is because of the close similarities in style of illumination across most of the Islamic world. As mentioned earlier, in the first half of the 16th century, both Ottoman and Mughal workshops were more or less dominated by émigré Safavid masters. Furthermore, there seems to have been a high degree of mobility of artists between the three empires. Stylistic influences from one tradition to the other were inevitable and thus traces of the Safavid style can be found in Ottoman as well as Mughal Qur'âns. Thus the task of identifying the correct provenance for Qur'âns from each of these empires is not a simple one. This situation also applies to secular manuscripts, for example, in the problem of distinguishing Indian from Iranian manuscripts.<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, there are substantial materials<sup>22</sup> of illuminated Safavid and Ottoman Qur'âns to work with, but this is not in case for Mughal Qur'âns, of which the number currently known seems to be quite limited.<sup>23</sup> Between the years 1973 to 1993, Christies and Sothebys offered for sale 191 Qur'âns of the 16th and 17th centuries (see appendix). Of this total, 77 Qur'âns are described as Safavid, 91 Qur'âns as Ottoman and only 23 Qur'âns as Mughal. In other words, in terms of percentage, 40% are attributed to the Safavids, 48% to the Ottomans and 12% to the Mughals. Yet it has to be said that the detailed grounds for these attributions are for the most part simply not given. Some of the methods that can be used to define

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<sup>21</sup> See Losty, *Art*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> See details in the Appendix.

<sup>23</sup> R. Ettinghausen, "Muslim Decorative Arts and Painting, their Nature and Impact on the Medieval West", in *Islam and Medieval West: A Loan Exhibition at the University Art Gallery - April 6 - May 4, 1975*, compiled & ed. S. Ferber (New York, 1975), 6.

the Safavid style in relation to that of the Ottomans and Mughals will now be discussed.

## **2. Documentary evidence**

First and foremost, one may focus on external information found in a given Qur'ân. This information is not artistic in nature but more in the form of written documentation such as the signature of the artist or a colophon or subsequent information about the particular Qur'ân in question. Most written information of this kind was usually added not by the artist himself but by the second or third party who owned the Qur'ân. Therefore, even though the artist is not known, other subsidiary information may be of value in addressing the problem of identification. Unfortunately most Qur'âns lack such basic extra information.<sup>24</sup> Apparently, most artists of this period were not in the habit of signing Qur'âns that they had copied or illuminated.

In the material from Christie's and Sotheby's catalogues alone (see appendix), of the 77 Safavid Qur'âns listed, only 25 Qur'âns contained signatures and thus constitute about 32% of the total amount. Of the 91 Ottoman Qur'âns, 39 have signatures and thus constitute about 43%. Of the 23 Mughal Qur'âns listed, only 7 were signed, which constitutes about 30%. It can therefore, be said that less than 40% of all the Qur'âns from these three empires were signed. This may simply be due to the fear of adding unQur'ânic text to the Qur'ân, and may also be designed to differentiate the Qur'ân from secular manuscripts. A signed Qur'ân might suggest that it was written by or belonged to a particular person. Muslims believe that the Qur'ân

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<sup>24</sup> James, *AT*, 113.

does not belong to any human being but only to God. For this reason, perhaps, most artists prefer to remain anonymous after they have finished copying the Qur'ân.<sup>25</sup>

Another source of information is in the colophon and *waqfiyah* itself. Sometimes, this information is a later addition and constitutes a means of documentation for a specific ceremonial gift. For example, as stated in a 16th-century Qur'ân:-

"in the year AH 1261 (AD 1848)  
Ahmed Elmas Aga made the Qur'ân  
a *waqf* to his own son Muhammad Yahya,  
and thereafter to his sons and their sons"<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, illuminated Qur'âns were also used as commercial commodities. Celebrated names were sometimes inscribed on Qur'âns to give them added value with a view to their sale. For example, according to James, the colophon of a 16th-century Qur'ân from Iran in the Chester Beatty Library, bearing the name of the famous <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh (al-Tabbâkh) al-Harâwî is a later forgery.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the reliability of the written information as to who copied the Qur'ân will always be in question. Another example is to be found in an Ottoman Qur'ân<sup>28</sup> attributed to the famous calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullâh and witnessed by the celebrated calligraphers Muḥammad <sup>c</sup>Ârif, Yaḥya Ḥilmî, Sâmi, Sayyid Aḥmad al-<sup>c</sup>Ârif and Sayyid Muḥammad

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<sup>25</sup> The explanation given here is in response to David James' quest for a satisfactory answer as to why there is a lack of information about the scribe/illuminator in most later illuminated Qur'âns. See James, *AT*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Christie's, 9 November 1977, 30.

<sup>27</sup> CBL Ms. 1499 fols. 213V-214R (Arberry no. 139). See James, *QB*, 80.

<sup>28</sup> Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 212.

Shawqî, dated 1303/1885. But Shaykh Ḥamdullâh was famous ca. 1500 A.D. and no date was given in this Qur'ân after his name except for the witnessed date. This string of witnesses could well suggest the period in which this Qur'ân was copied, but unfortunately only one date was given instead of six dates. Thus it is possible that all six witnesses were present at the same time in 1303/1885. Such information certainly poses many unanswered questions. Given the small number of manuscripts that have signed colophons or signed illumination,<sup>29</sup> one is often left with no more than a beautiful but enigmatic illuminated Qur'ân. These Qur'âns need detail stylistic analysis so as to decode the language of the artists themselves.

### 3. Formal considerations

This method concentrates on such artistic evidence as the lines, shapes, colours and format of illuminated Qur'âns. These elements build up the character or style of the Qur'ân and together constitute a visual statement by the artist. The first step towards defining the style of each of these three "national" traditions of illuminated Qur'âns (Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal) is to assess the overall visual evidence. It seems likely enough that different empires should favour different design schemes and tastes.<sup>30</sup> The first thing that attracts one's attention in any illuminated Qur'ân is the colour, layout, format and script. These are interdependent elements and are of equal importance; and they make one Qur'ân different from another. Thus the initial focus is on the overall effect, on a general level and not a detailed level. The next step is to focus on details, through which the individuality of each Qur'ân

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<sup>29</sup> James, *AT*, 113.

<sup>30</sup> J. Mathé, *The Civilization of Islam*, tr. D. Macrae (Minerva, 1980), 150.



gradually emerges. Whatever conclusion is arrived at as a result of this first general impression needs to be checked again and again by other details in the Qur'ân in question.

### 3.1. Colours

These three groups of 16th-17th century illuminated Qur'âns are not easy to tell apart. This is natural because of the rich design structure that camouflages their differences. Still, it is possible to make some detailed observations as to their use of colour and layout or format. Colours and formats depend on each other, since the format indirectly controls the amount of colours used. This is because of nature of the design is based on patterns. Colours must be painted within the allocated space of the design. The beauty of the arabesque design depends on the colours<sup>31</sup> *vice versa*. Safavid Qur'âns present two sets of colour schemes in their composition, namely the combination of light blue and greenish gold, which gives an overall greenish effect, and the combination of dark blue and reddish gold. The latter uses more dark blue and also a systematic arrangement of red, which creates an overall dark purplish-red effect, or a strong element of red vibrating within the dark blue background.

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<sup>31</sup> S. Okasha, *The Muslim Painter and the Divine: The Persian Impact on Islamic Religious Painting* (London, 1981), 17.

### a). First colour scheme

The first colour scheme found in 16th-century Safavid Qur'âns — light blue and greenish gold — is reminiscent of Timurid illumination. These early Safavid Qur'âns display an overall greenish effect in the composition. This is because of the well-distributed fine floral and arabesque designs painted in gold upon the light blue background. There are also fine floral patterns painted systematically in orange and green on a light blue background throughout the composition. This type of Qur'ân consists of a gold dome-shaped or triangular-shaped design overlapping the light blue crenellated border. This gold dome-shaped design also extended to the fore-edge margin of the Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen in early 16th-century Safavid Qur'ân sold at Christies in 1989<sup>32</sup> (see Pl. 1). A comparable example can be seen in a Timurid Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library, but this uses a slightly different design.<sup>33</sup> Similar colour schemes can also be found in the Qur'âns using the floral border format. These Qur'âns also have elaborate floral designs within the text block. The text blends harmoniously with the floral and arabesque patterns. An example of this can be seen in a Safavid Qur'ân datable ca. 1500-1550 A.D.<sup>34</sup> (see Pl. 2) and also in the Qazwînî Qur'ân copied by <sup>ʿ</sup>Alî Riḍâ al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Abbâsî, dated 995/1586-87 (see Pl. 3).<sup>35</sup> Both these Qur'âns contain more gold than the early 16th-century Qur'ân mentioned earlier but they still maintain the overall greenish effect in their composition.

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<sup>32</sup> Christie's, 10 October 1989, lot 316.

<sup>33</sup> CBL Ms. 1521. See Lings, *QACI*, pl. 86.

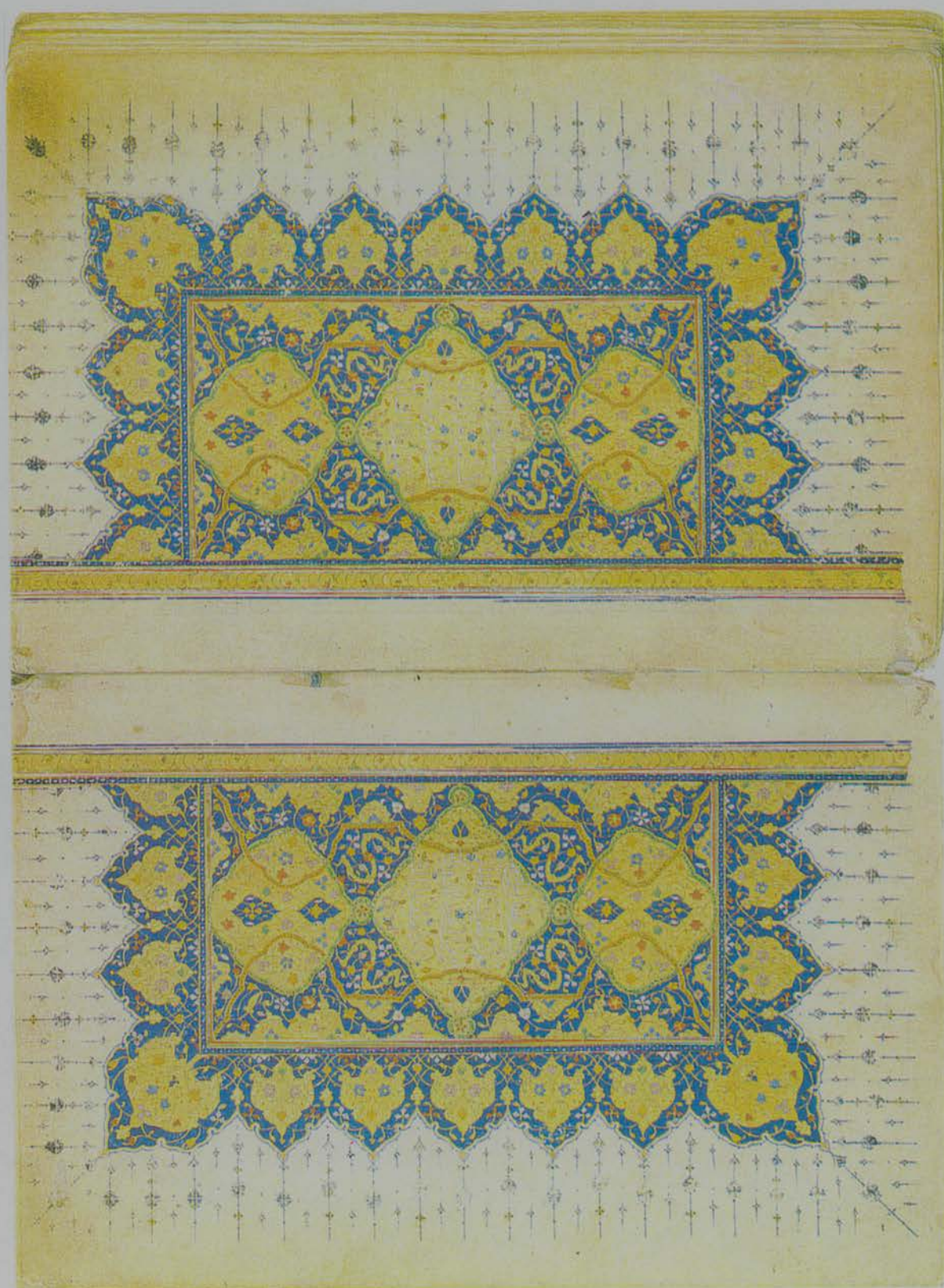
<sup>34</sup> Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, lot 69.



Pl. 1. Safavid Qur'ân, datable early 16th century A.D.





Pl. 2. Safavid Qur'an, datable ca. 1500-1550 A.D.





Pl. 3. Safavid Qur'an, copied by <sup>c</sup>Alī Ridā al-<sup>c</sup>Abbāsī, dated 995/1586-87. Qazwīn.

In 16th-century Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns, the overall greenish effect colour scheme can also be found. But what makes them Ottoman or Mughal is their layout and crenellated border designs. The crenellated border design of Ottoman Qur'âns was rather heavy, bold, and less graceful than the Safavid Qur'âns. For example, in these Ottoman Qur'âns there is often a bold floral arabesque pattern that surfaces from the outer blue and gold borders outside the text block. These floral motifs can either be painted far apart or close to one another. Examples include a Qur'ân datable ca. 1550 A.D.<sup>36</sup> (see Pl. 4) and another dated 999/1590 (see Pl. 5).<sup>37</sup> Ottoman Qur'âns lack the relaxed atmosphere found in the Safavid Qur'âns; they tend to be more hard-edge with heavy blocks of form and of colour, strong outlines, and loud, assertive, almost jarring motifs. These are of course subjective impressions, but they are the fruit of careful study.

The style of Mughal Qur'âns, on the other hand, is entirely different from that of the Ottoman ones but quite close to the Safavid ones. Some distinction can still be made between these three schools. The crenellated borders and the internal text block in Mughal Qur'âns are filled with fine overlapping floral and arabesque designs which are more densely painted than in Safavid Qur'âns. These painted areas swarm with motifs that seem to melt into one another. The Mughal floral and arabesque motifs are so minutely drawn that they tend to lose their individuality and disintegrate into the background colours. These characteristics are found in a Mughal Qur'ân copied by Ibn ʿAlî Aḥmad al-Sharîf, datable to the second half of the 16th century<sup>38</sup> (see Pl. 6).

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<sup>36</sup> Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 92.

<sup>37</sup> Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 340.

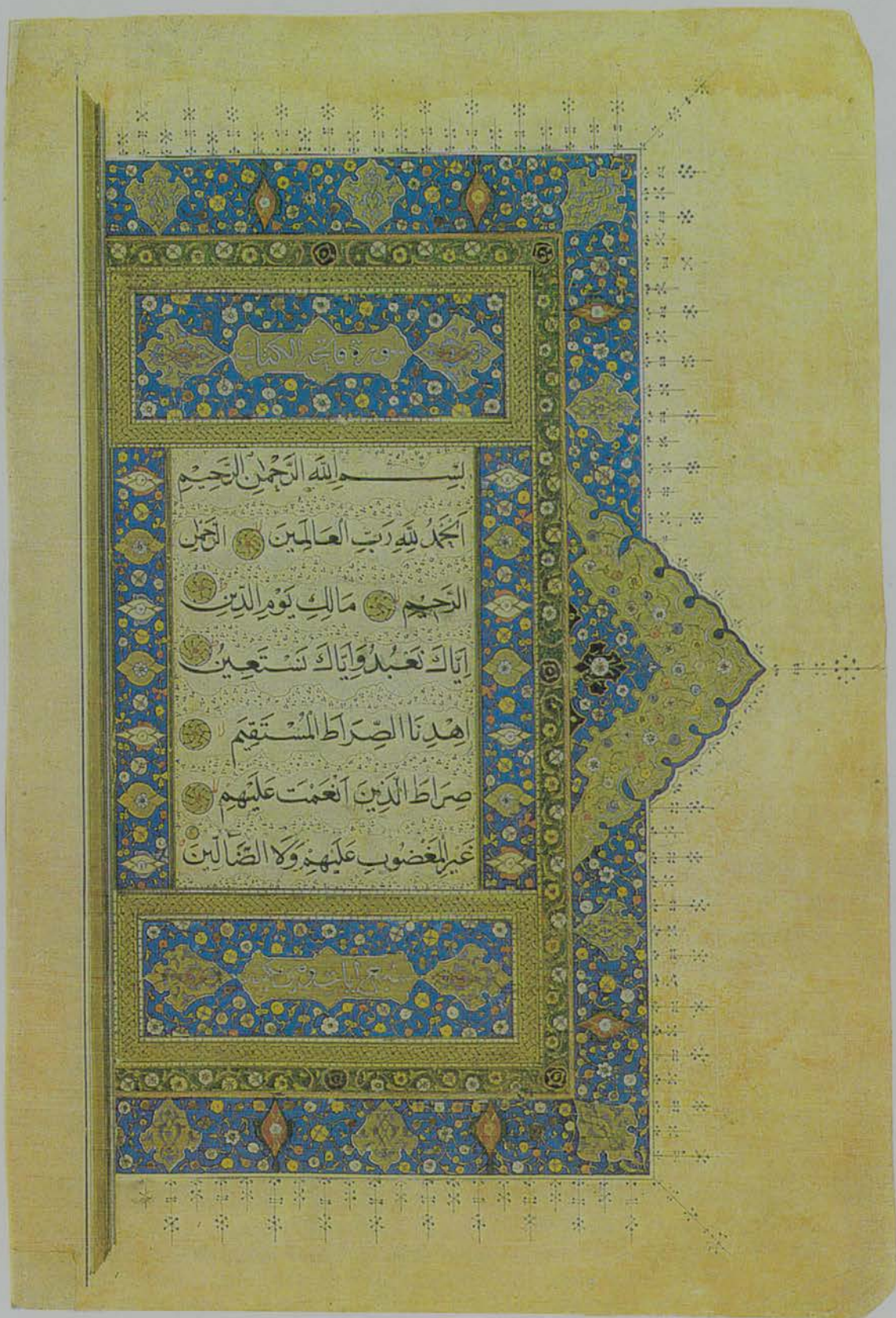
<sup>38</sup> Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 234. Here the overall tonality is distinctively different from Safavid Qur'âns, as its dense thicket of scrollwork.





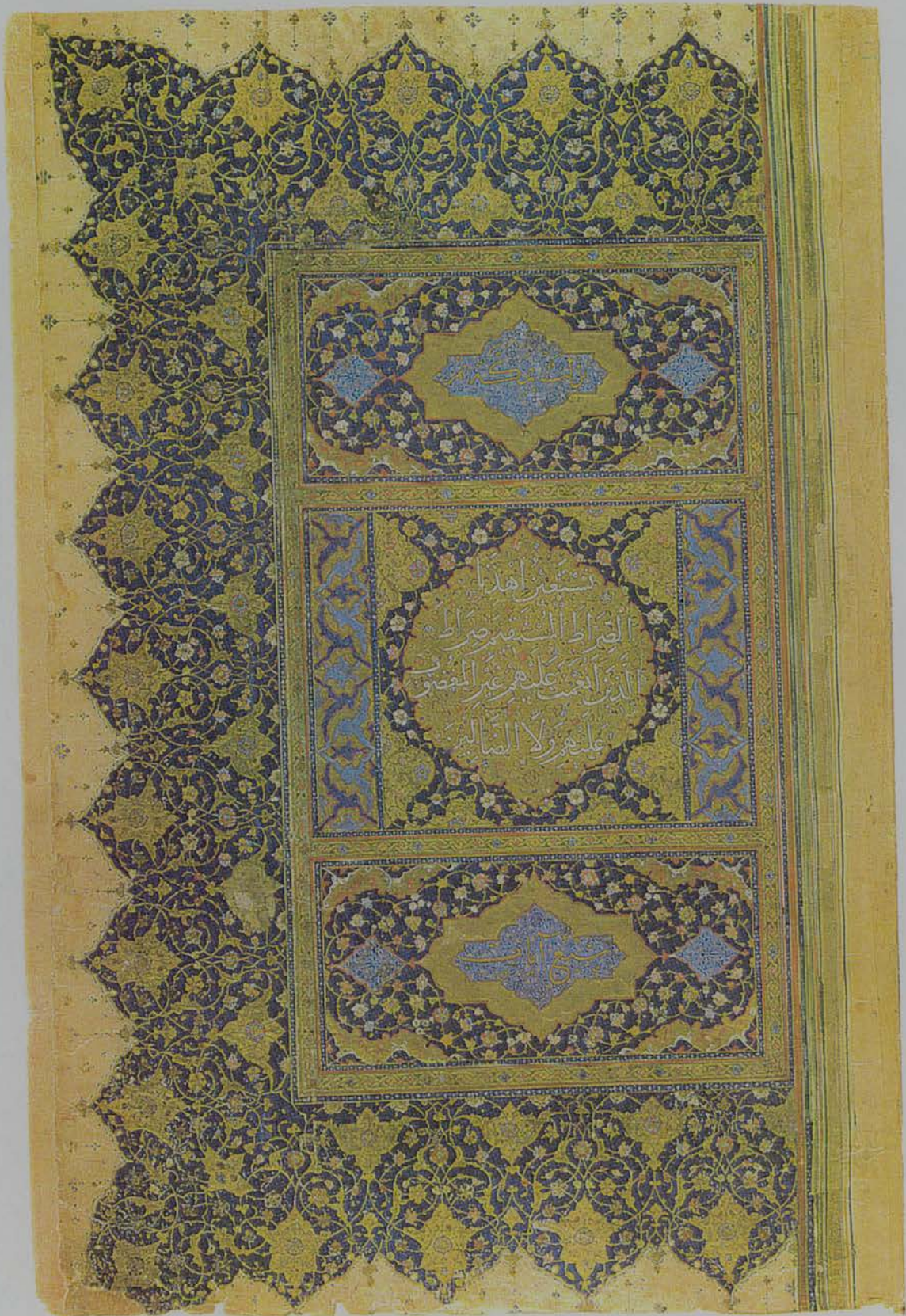
Pl. 4. Ottoman Qur'ân, datable ca. 1550 A.D.





Pl. 5. Ottoman Qur'ân, dated 999/1590.





Pl. 6. Mughal Qur'ân, copied by Ibn <sup>c</sup>Alî Ahmad al-Sharîf,  
2nd half of the 16th century.



## **b). Second colour scheme**

The second set of colour schemes reflects the vibration of a dark purplish-red colour — created by dark blue and red units — in the overall composition. This is because of the interplay of dark blue, vermilion and gold, which was systematically placed to create, by the juxtaposition of strong colours, that overall tinge of dark purplish-red in their compositions. This colour effect can be found in all three schools of Qur'âns — Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal — it is strongest in the Safavid examples. In Safavid work, in terms of colour properties, gold may be considered as a strong and rich colour that generates extra light. The artist manages to reduce the intensity of this gold colour by his skilful arrangement of dark blue and vermilion, as well as other secondary and tertiary colours. All this points to an ingenious interplay of colours and a calculated concept of balance in the composition. The secret of success is the ability to create balance in every aspect, in colour as well as in the hidden structure of the composition. This dark purplish-red colour gives a kind of regal status to the illumination of Safavid Qur'âns.

Some Safavid Qur'âns show an almost perfect balance in their colours and in their composition. A roughly equal percentage of gold and dark blue plus a well-distributed vermilion, created the beautiful dark purplish-red effect mentioned above. The motivation in many such compositions is to achieve a subtle overall effect. When more dark blue is used within the painted block, more gold floral patterns were added in the head, fore-edge and tail margins in order to create a balanced composition. The strong impact of the dark blue areas, at the centre, was reduced by the gold floral patterns in the margins. Such gold-painted margins also correspond harmoniously with whatever gold designs exist within the dark blue areas. Thus every aspect of the page was given equal attention. An example of this can be seen in a 16th-century

Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library<sup>39</sup> (see Pl. 7). In other instances, when all these three margins are left unpainted, except for fine blue finials, the effect of balance is achieved within the painted block. Almost equal amounts of dark blue and gold are used in this painted block, as in the Qur'ân copied by Asadullâh b. Muḥammad al-Kashânî, dated 967/1560 (see Pl. 8).<sup>40</sup> Comparable work can be seen in a Qur'ân copied and illuminated by Ruzbihan.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, when the composition of the painted block requires more painted areas of gold, dark blue floral patterns are used surrounding the painted block or in all three margins — the head, the fore-edge and the tail margins. The effect of such blue floral patterns in the margins was much stronger than that of the blue finials of the Qur'ân of Asadullâh ibn Muḥammad al-Kashânî. This method can also be found in a Qur'ân datable ca. 1580 A.D.<sup>42</sup> (see Pl. 9). All these devices were used by Safavid artists in a very subtle way and created a harmonious balanced effect in their compositions.

Ottoman Qur'âns show some contrasting differences in their style of illumination. Their compositions tend to be rather bold and heavy. This is due in large part to the pervasive use of black in these compositions, for which no satisfactory Safavid parallels suggest themselves. Apart from this general impression, however, there are also examples of early 16th-century Ottoman Qur'âns that show very close similarities to the Safavid style. Even so, evidence as to their Ottoman provenance can be detected especially in their *âyah*-markers.<sup>43</sup> An example of this type of Ottoman

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<sup>39</sup> CBL Ms. 1545, ff.2v-3r. See Lings, *QACI*, pl. 90.

<sup>40</sup> Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.

<sup>41</sup> CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry no. 156). See James, *AT*, pl. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Christie's, 27-29 April 1993, lot 36. See CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

<sup>43</sup> See 3.6, for a discussion of the style of *âyah*-markers.

Qur'ân which is close to the Safavid style except for the *âyah*-marker can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Qirîmî, dated 973/1565-6 (see Pl. 10).<sup>44</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Qirîmî was a noted calligrapher of the second half of the 16th century and an apprentice to one of the pupils of Shaykh Ḥamdullâh.<sup>45</sup> Another example is a Qur'ân dated 983/1575, with a peculiarly bold format for the text, for which no Safavid parallel presents itself (see Pl. 11).<sup>46</sup> The blue and red colours in this particular Ottoman Qur'ân, create a feeling of boldness and heaviness in the composition, for example in the combinations of red and white and red and green, or in the strong black outline for the illumination as a whole. Indeed, the strong use of black can be regarded as Ottoman characteristic. The use of a multiple border line for the illumination, instead of the single red line so often used to outline, say, a text panel in Safavid Qur'âns, makes for a powerful visual effect, as does the thick white outline for the elements within the central panel, and the predominantly black frame for the text block (of Pl. 10 too). In other cases (e.g. Pl. 10) the Ottoman style can be detected in the "pelvic" shapes of the escutcheons in the outermost border, in the *âyah*-markers and in the black ground of the border of the text block. The overall format here could be Safavid, but these details proclaim an Ottoman provenance. Furthermore, the disposition of motifs in the overall painted area is looser than in Safavid work.

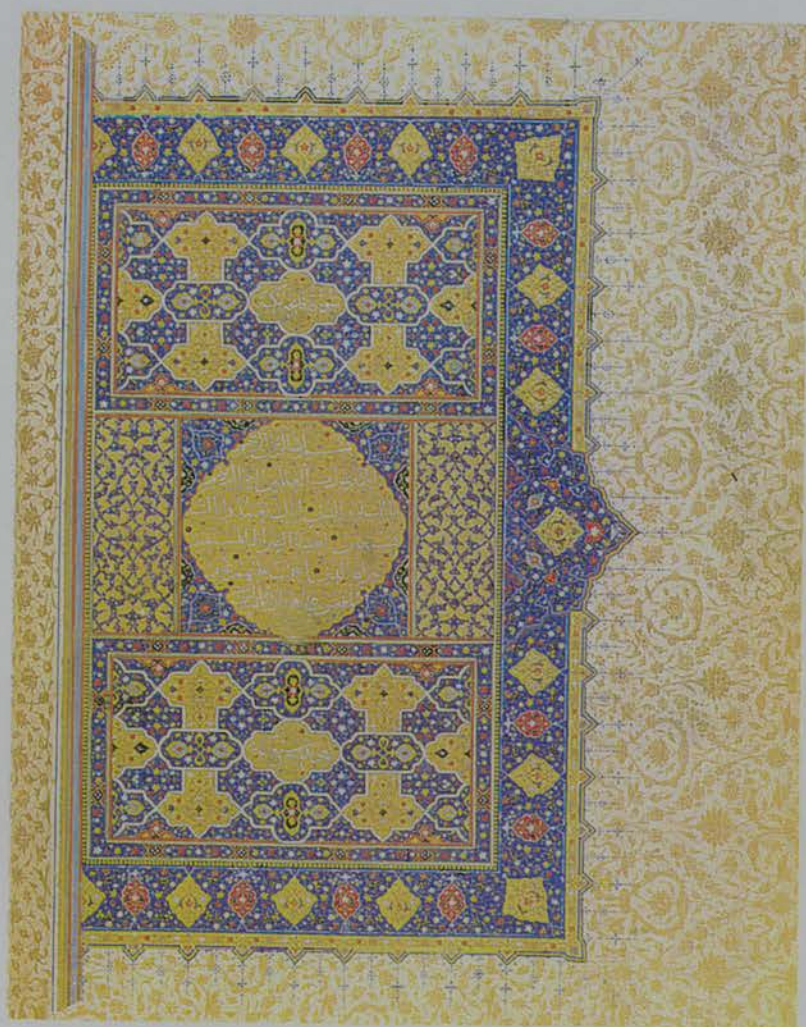
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<sup>44</sup> Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 63.

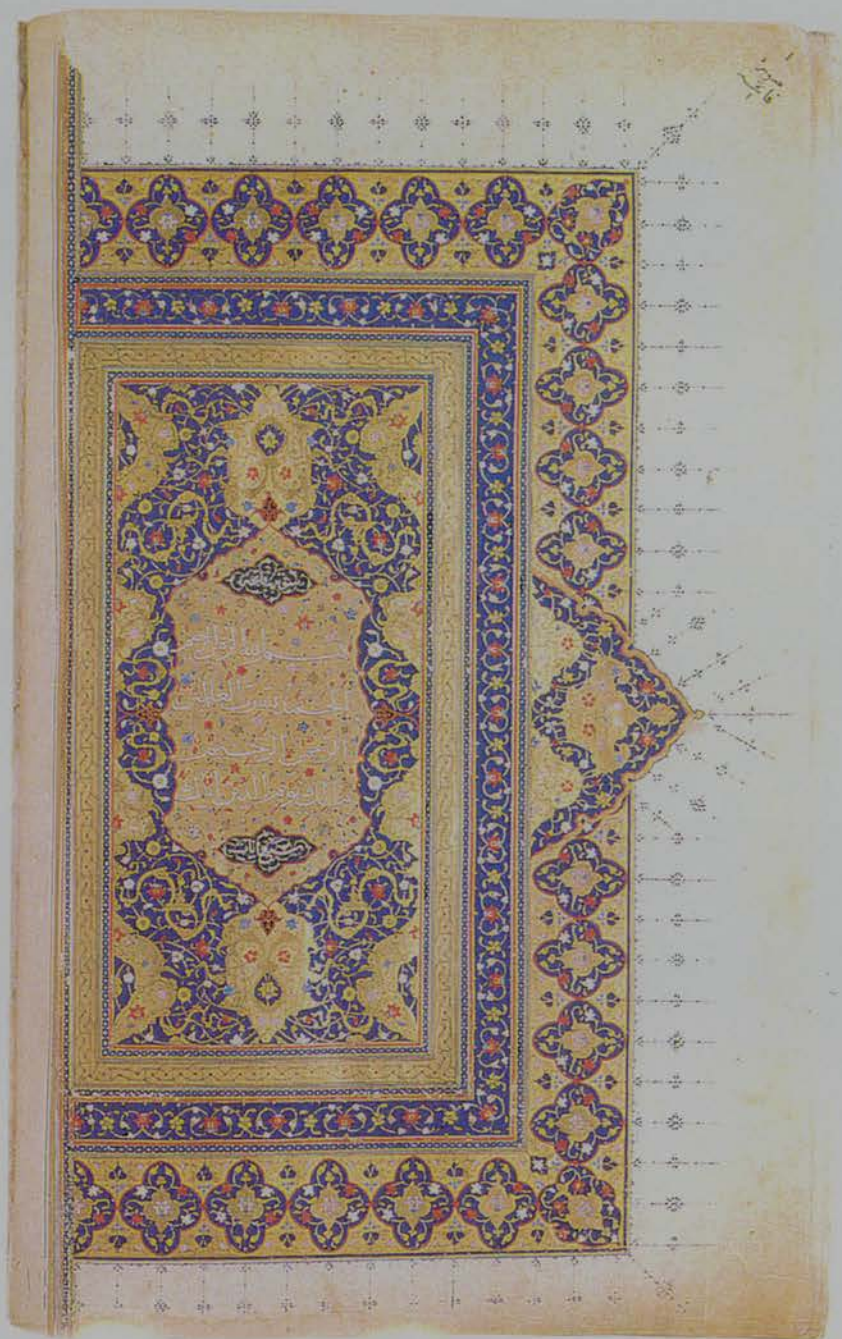
<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>46</sup> Sotheby's, 13 October 1980, lot 138.



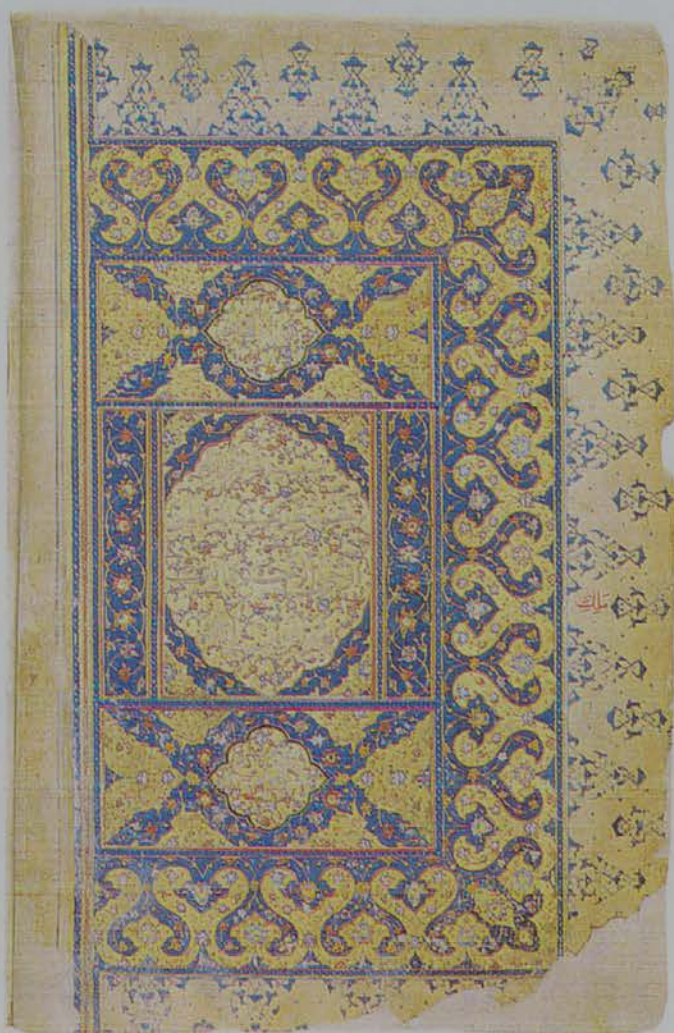


Pl. 7. Safavid Qur'ân, datable 16th century.

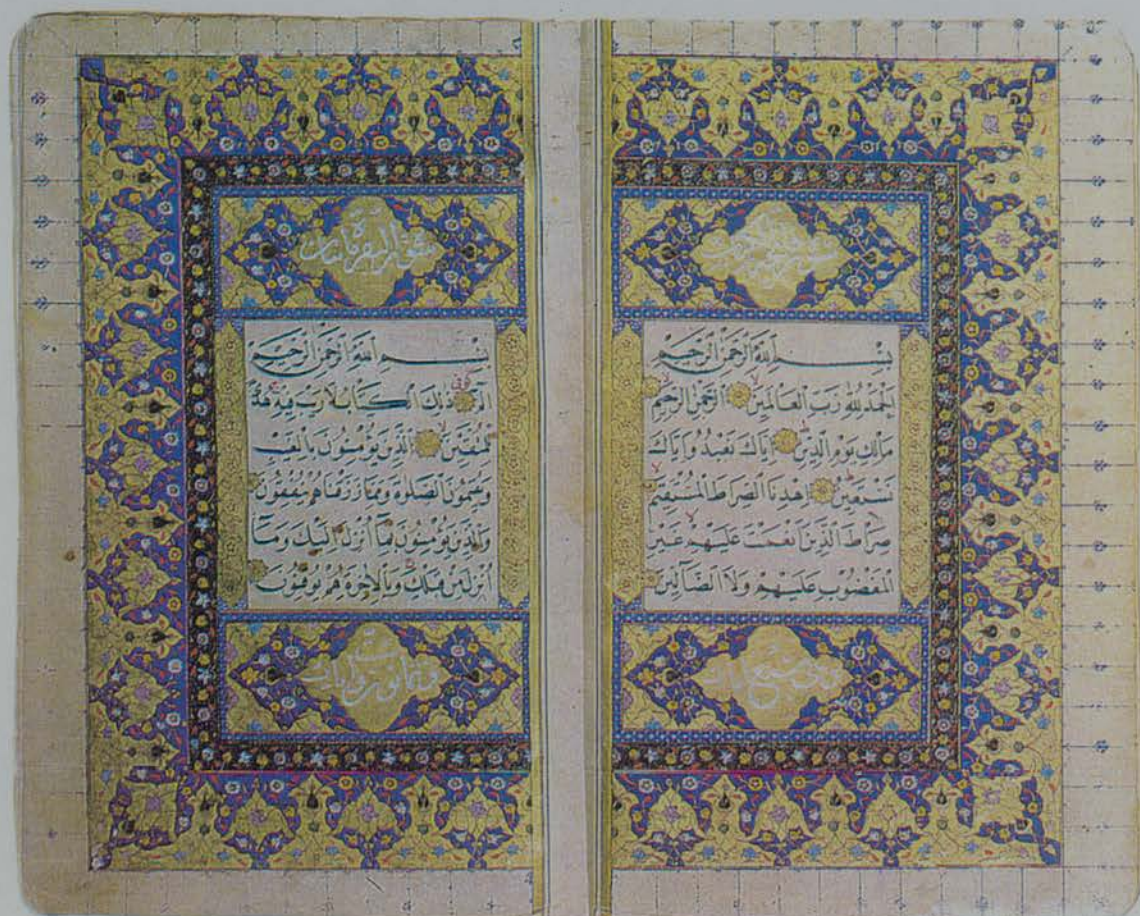


Pl. 8. Safavid Qur'ân, copied by Asadullâh ibn Muhammad al-Kashânî, dated 967/1560.





Pl. 9. Safavid Qur'ân, ca. 1580 A.D.



Pl. 10. Ottoman Qur'ân, copied by <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh al-Qirîmî, dated 973/1565-6.



In this Qur'ân (Pl. 11) the Ottoman style can also be detected by the big blue flower motifs painted within the gold fan-like design at the top and bottom of the text block. These flowers were depicted with a gradation of blue tones, thus suggesting an attempt to portray a three-dimensional effect or plastic effect in their flowers. Later, these flower motifs were depicted in a more realistic way as shown in a Qur'ân copied by Muṣṭafâ al-Hilmî and dated 1214/1719 (see Pl. 12).<sup>47</sup> The Ottoman artists were fond of incorporating such a three-dimensional, modelled treatment of flowers within an overall framework of very different abstract motifs in their composition. Such flowers were probably added to attract attention, or to break the monotonous flower and arabesque designs in their composition. This idea is not found in Safavid or Mughal Qur'âns. There is indeed one example of a Safavid Qur'ân that has big flowers, but they are depicted flat and no attempt is made to create the three-dimensional effect found in Ottoman Qur'âns. This is the Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan Muḥammad al-Tabḥî al-Shîrâzî, dated 952/1545-6, in the Khalili collection.<sup>48</sup> The big flower motifs are depicted in a single greyish-blue-tone on the right and left hand-side of the text, within the text block. These flowers are not as prominent as in the Ottoman style but merely exist alongside other flower motifs in the composition (see the comparison of these flowers in Pl. 13).

Ottoman artists also created a dome-shaped design repeated three times, for the double illuminated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and the early part of *Sûrah* 2. The decorated text block is depicted as if overlapping the three domical designs painted at the head, fore-edge and tail margins. An example of this dome-shaped format can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Dâwûd ibn ʿAbdullâh, dated 985/1577, Istanbul, in the Khalili

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<sup>47</sup> Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.

<sup>48</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pp. 146-7, pl. 39.

collection<sup>49</sup> (see Pl. 14) and in a 17th-century Ottoman Qur'ân from Sotheby's.<sup>50</sup> This particular style of illumination can be found in early 17th century Mughal Qur'âns<sup>51</sup> but it is not known in Safavid Qur'âns. The Mughal style can thus be said to be probably derivative from the Ottoman style of illumination, which had a rather longer pedigree. Slight modifications were made in the Mughal design, for example by having another layer of painted area in the vertical rectangular shape. The Ottoman style uses two overlapping layers of painted area, that is, the text block and the thrice repeated dome-shaped design. On the other hand, the Mughal style uses three overlapping layers of painted area, that is, the text block, the thrice repeated dome-shaped design and the rectangular design. Typical examples can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî,<sup>52</sup> in North India, dated 1037/1627.

The floral and arabesque designs in the Mughal style are jam-packed with minute details. This obsession with depicting fine arabesque designs and detailed floral patterns is typical of the Mughal style of illumination. Everything within the painted block is compactly depicted, thus creating an altogether impenetrable atmosphere (see Pl. 15). Even the margins are filled with orange, Indian yellow<sup>53</sup> and light blue designs. Neither this colour scheme nor this type of design are found in Safavid Qur'âns and not even in Persian illumination generally. Furthermore, Mughal artists

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<sup>49</sup> Khalili, QUR214. See James, *AT*, pl. 60, and Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 339.

<sup>50</sup> Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 216.

<sup>51</sup> Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* The *nisbah* of the scribe means that one should be prepared for Safavid elements in this Qur'ân.

<sup>53</sup> Pal, *Court*, 16.

were also fond of certain distinctive colours such as pink, orange and green<sup>54</sup> as well as the traditional colours of dark blue and gold,<sup>55</sup> as can be seen in a fine example of a Mughal Qur'ân datable ca. 1590 A.D.<sup>56</sup> A comparable style of Mughal illumination can be seen in a Qur'ân from the second half of the 16th century from Sotheby's.<sup>57</sup> This Qur'ân is far less decorative than the previous Qur'ân and obviously illustrates an earlier style of illumination.

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<sup>54</sup> Losty, *Art*, 85.

<sup>55</sup> M. Fraser, 'A large illuminated Mughal Qur'an', in *Sotheby's*, 22-23 October 1992, 279.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, lot 581.

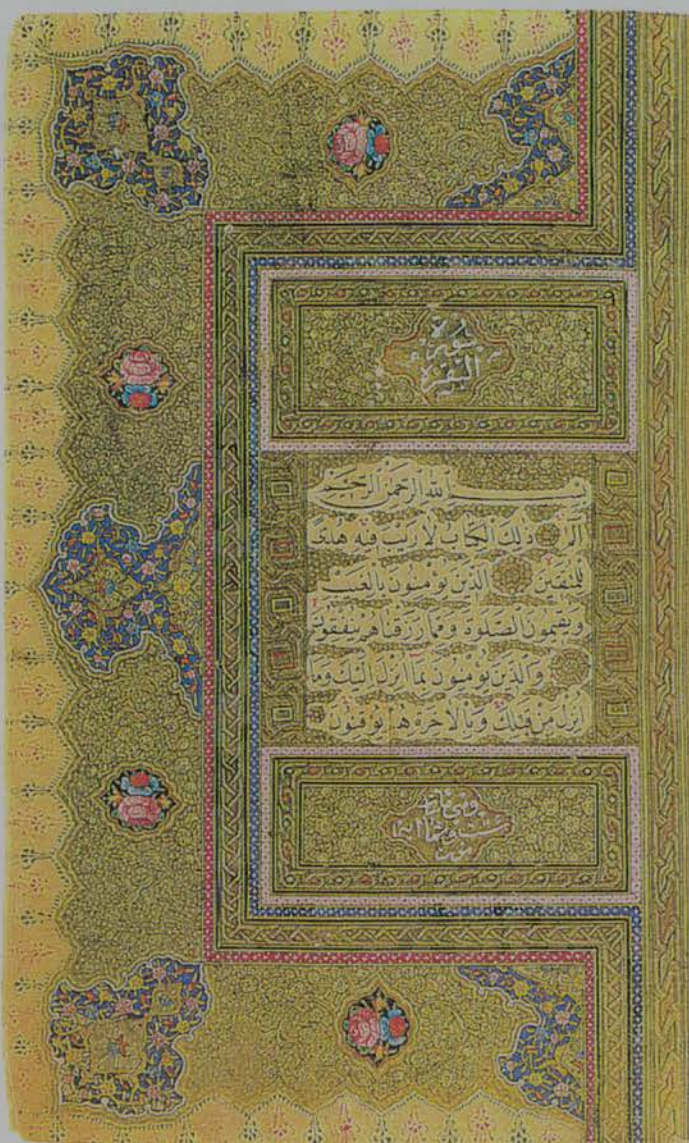
<sup>57</sup> Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 234.





Pl. 11. Ottoman Qur'ân, dated 983/1575.





Pl. 12. Ottoman Qur'ân, copied by Mustafâ al-Hilmî, dated 1214/1719.



a). Sotheby's, 13 October 1980, Lot 138. Ottoman Qur'ân.  
Dated 1575 A.D.



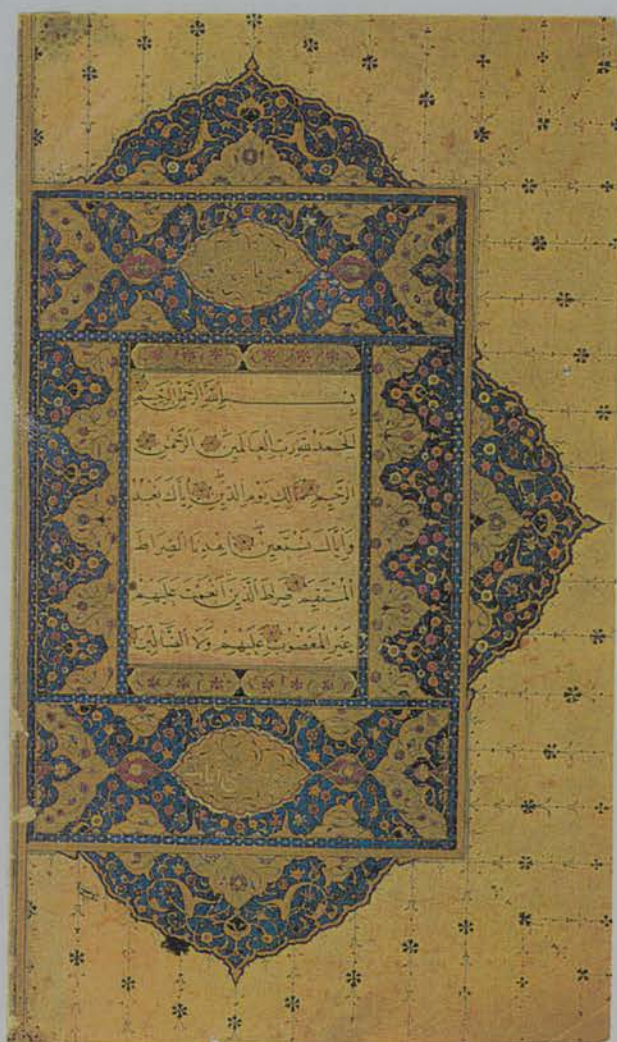
b). Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, Lot 240. Ottoman Qur'ân,  
copied by Mustafa al-Hilmi. Dated 1214/1719 A.D.



c). Khalili, QUR 111. Safavid Qur'ân. Dated 952/1545-6 A.D.

Pl. 13. Flower designs in the Qur'âns.





Pl. 14. Ottoman Qur'ân, copied by Dâwûd ibn <sup>c</sup>Abdullâh, dated 985/1577. Istanbul.



Pl. 15. Mughal Qur'ân, ca. 1590 A.D.



### 3.2 Frame formats

Basically, the frame format can be divided into four design groups;<sup>58</sup> they are as follows:

- i. The plain frame format (D.1 design).
- ii. The triangular or dome-shaped format that extends from the text block or from the frame [either at the head, fore-edge and tail margins or at the fore-edge margin] (D.2 design).
- iii. The crenellated frame (D.3 design).
- iv. The U-shaped frame (D.4 design).

#### Ottoman

16th and 17th-century Ottoman Qur'âns illustrate of three groups of frame design: D.1, D.2 and D.3 (see Figs. 1a and 1b). The D.1 design can be considered as the simplest. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafâ Dede ibn Hamdullâh and dated 985/1551.<sup>59</sup> In the D.2 type, there are triangular shapes drawn in the head, tail and fore-edge margins. This design can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 938/1531-2 in the Khalili collection.<sup>60</sup> D.2.4 is a variant of D.2 design (see Fig. 1a). Here the three triangular shapes were replaced by dome-shapes at the head, tail and fore-edge margins. This design can be found in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥassan and dated 996/1587.<sup>61</sup> Crenellated frames (D.3) are also found in Ottoman Qur'âns. An example of the D.3 frame format, which has small crenellated borders,

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<sup>58</sup> This study was based on dated Qur'âns listed in 1.1 of this chapter.

<sup>59</sup> Khalili, QUR533. See James, *AT*, pl.57.

<sup>60</sup> Khalili, QUR82. See James, *AT*, pl.54.

<sup>61</sup> Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.

can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 912/1506-7 and copied by Muṣṭafâ ibn Naṣûḥ al-Selânikî.<sup>62</sup> In 16th-century Ottoman Qur'âns, several variants<sup>63</sup> of the D.3 design can be seen, as in D.3.1, D.3.2, D.3.6 and D.3.7. This crenellated frame design seems to have developed into a bigger zig-zag frame. The double crenellated frame was introduced in the second half of the 16th century (see Fig. 1a). From the 17th century onwards, several variants<sup>64</sup> of D.3 can be found. Some are new while others are merely a repetition of 16th-century design. Examples of these variants can be seen in D.3.3, D.3.7 and D.3.8 as shown in Fig. 1b.<sup>65</sup>

### Mughal

As for Mughal Qur'âns, one variant of the D.1 design, namely D.1.2, can be seen in the second half of the 17th century. This Qur'ân was copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî

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<sup>62</sup> Khalili, QUR429. See James, *AT*, pl.55.

<sup>63</sup> For the D.3.1 design, see Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44. This Qur'ân was copied by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Walî al-Daftarî and is dated 1000/1591. For the D.3.2 design, see Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45. This Qur'ân was copied by Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî and dated 973/1565. For the D.3.6 design, see Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86. This Qur'ân was copied by Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullâh al-Nishâpûrî and dated 948/541. For the D.3.7 design, see Sotheby's, 13 October 1981, lot 275. This Qur'ân was copied by Iskandar ibn ʿAbdullâh and is dated 976/1568.

<sup>64</sup> All these frame formats occur repeatedly in Ottoman Qur'âns throughout the 16th and 17th century. The examples given in the text are taken only from dated Ottoman Qur'âns, although there are many other undated examples that one could pick to match these designs.

<sup>65</sup> For the D.3.3 design, see Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108. This Qur'ân was copied by Muṣṭafâ ibn Muḥammad, a pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî, and is dated 1055/1645. For the D.3.7 design, see Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240. This Qur'ân was copied by Mustafâ al-Hilmî and is dated 1214/1719. For the D.3.8 design, see Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326. This Qur'ân was copied by Ḥâfîz ʿUthmân and is dated 1082/1671.

and is dated 1092/1681.<sup>66</sup> In this particular example, there is a frame within a frame. The centre frame was depicted with fine short lines reminiscent of a carpet-like design with strings at its edges. Such a design is rare in Ottoman Qur'âns. On the other hand, the D.2.3 design can also be found in Mughal Qur'âns, again with a slight difference. The D.2.3 design uses a single triangular shape at the fore-edge margin overlapping the double frames for the text block. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr b. Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî and dated 966/1558.<sup>67</sup> A three-dome-shaped design can be found in a Mughal Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî,<sup>68</sup> dated 1037/1627. This is a D.2.5 type of design which is different from the Ottoman D.2.4 design<sup>69</sup> (see Fig. 1b).

### Safavid

16th century Safavid Qur'âns display all four groups of frame design: D.1, D.2, D.3 and D.4 (see Fig. 1a). D.1, D.2.1 and D.3.3 can be found in the first half of the 16th century. The D.1 frame design seems to have existed almost at the same time as the Ottoman version (see Fig. 1a). An example of a dated Safavid Qur'ân that uses the D.1 frame format can be seen in the Khalili collection, accession no. QUR729.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, in the 1530s A.D., a D.2.1 design found in a Safavid Qur'ân<sup>71</sup> is a variant

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<sup>66</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

<sup>67</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>68</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

<sup>69</sup> See Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 339.

<sup>70</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>71</sup> Safavid Qur'ân copied by (Nûr al-Dîn) Muḥammad Ḥusayn ibn Muḥyi ('l-Dîn) al-Harâwî, dated 944/1537-8, from Bukhârâ or Herât. Khalili, QUR114. See James, *AT*, pl.33.

of the D.2 design found in Ottoman Qur'âns.<sup>72</sup> In the second half of the 16th century, there are five designs found in Safavid Qur'âns: D.3.1, D.4, D.4.1, D.2.3 and D.3.2. The design of a Qur'ân (D.3.1) copied by Husayn al-Shîrâzî dated 961/1553,<sup>73</sup> is quite similar to that of an Ottoman Qur'ân copied by Maḥmûd ibn ʿAbd al-Walî al-Ḍaḡfârî and dated 1000/1591<sup>74</sup> (see Fig. 1a). The D.4 design and its variants can be said to have been introduced in the mid-16th century and it is often found in Safavid Qur'âns. Such designs are rare in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns.<sup>75</sup> This U-shaped frame (D.4) can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tabḥî al-Shîrâzî and dated 952/1545-6.<sup>76</sup> Another example, the D.4.1 design, can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd<sup>77</sup> and dated 975-6/1567-8 (see Fig. 1a). The D.4 variants - that is D.4.2, D.4.3 and D.4.4 - can also be found in the second half of the 17th century (see Fig. 1b). An example of the D.4.2 design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Mîrza Aḥmad and dated 1096/1684.<sup>78</sup> The D.4.3 design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî and dated 1101/1689.<sup>79</sup> The D.4.4

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<sup>72</sup> See Khalili, QUR82 (James, *AT*, pl.54). Qur'ân copied in 959/1552, from Shîrâz or Qazwîn.

<sup>73</sup> See Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.

<sup>74</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44.

<sup>75</sup> No dated Ottoman or Mughal Qur'âns with U-shaped frame designs were found in the course of this study.

<sup>76</sup> Khalili, QUR111. See James, *AT*, pl.39.

<sup>77</sup> CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry no. 154).

<sup>78</sup> CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry no. 173).

<sup>79</sup> Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193.



design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥāshim (al-Tayir) and dated 1100/1688.<sup>80</sup>

The D.2.3 design found in a Mughal Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî (dated 966/1558),<sup>81</sup> can also be found in a Safavid Qur'ân copied by ʿAlî ibn Muḥammad Muqaddam from Karbala<sup>82</sup> and dated 993/1585, but no example is found in Ottoman Qur'ân (see Fig. 1a). On the other hand, the D.3.2 design of an Ottoman Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî (dated 973/1565)<sup>83</sup> can also be found in a Safavid Qur'ân copied by ʿAlî Riza al-ʿAbbâsî from Qazwîn and dated 995/1586-7.<sup>84</sup>

In the 17th century variants of D.3 such as D.3.4, D.3.5 and D.3.9 are common in Safavid Qur'âns but are rarely found in Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns (see Fig. 1b). An example of D.3.4 design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Mehdi al-Kâtib al-Mashhadî and dated 1011/1602.<sup>85</sup> The zig-zag design of D.3.4 is depicted within the frame, whereas in the D.3.5 design, the zig-zag design is without a line in the fore-edge margin.<sup>86</sup> As for the D.3.9 design, an example of this can be seen

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<sup>80</sup> Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.

<sup>81</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>82</sup> Khalili, QUR625. See James, *AT*, pl.49.

<sup>83</sup> Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.

<sup>84</sup> Christie, 12 April 1988, lot 69.

<sup>85</sup> Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 35.

<sup>86</sup> See the Qur'ân from Isfâhân, dated 1084/1673, in the Chester Beatty Library, Ms. 1554.

in a Safavid Qur'ân dated 1069/1658 (see Fig. 1b).<sup>87</sup> The three-dome-shaped design found in Ottoman (D.2.4 design) and Mughal (D.2.5 design) Qur'âns is not found in Safavid Qur'âns. Instead, the concept of the dome-shaped design was used in a U-shaped format in Safavid Qur'âns (see D.4.3).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.

<sup>88</sup> Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193.

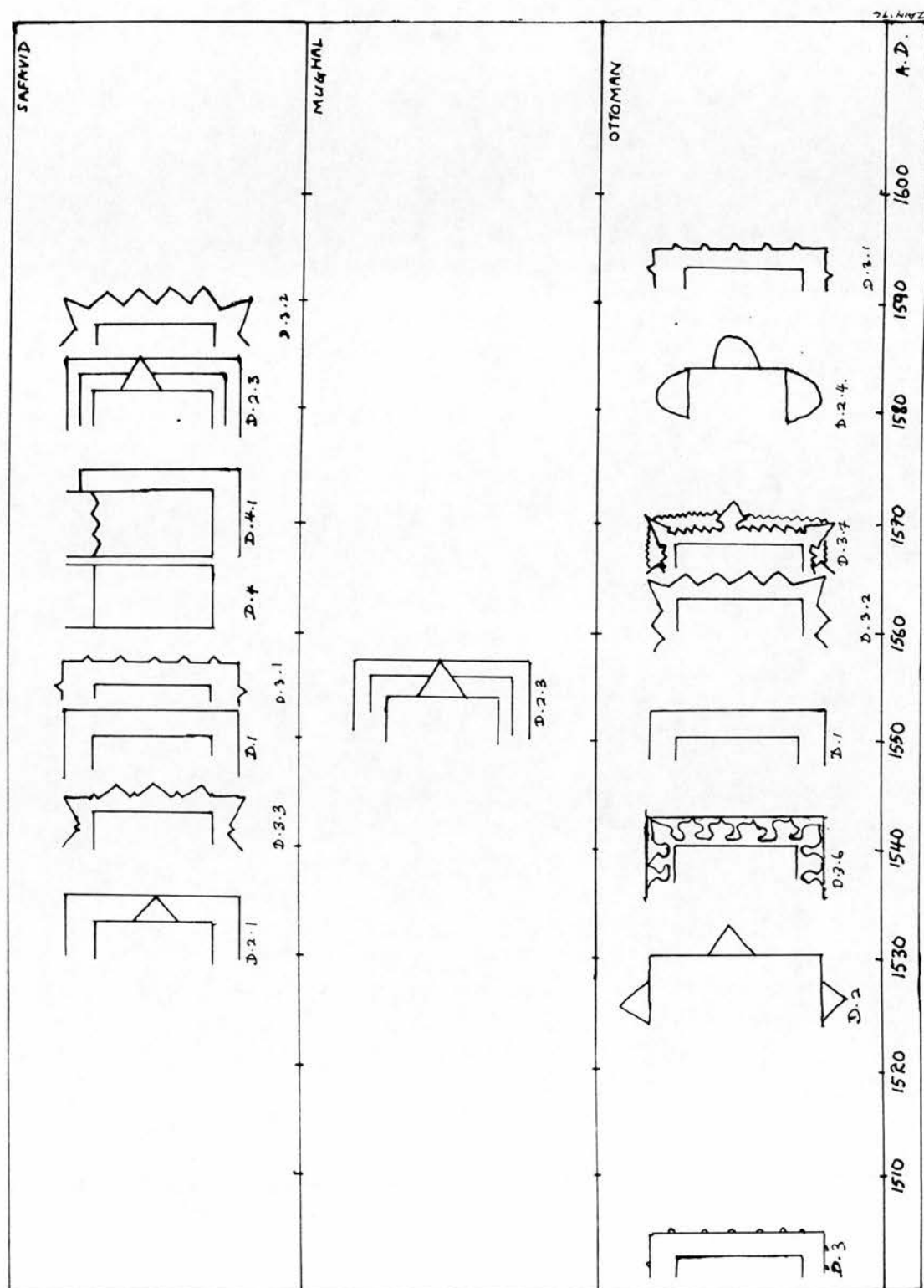


Fig. 1a. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman frame formats.

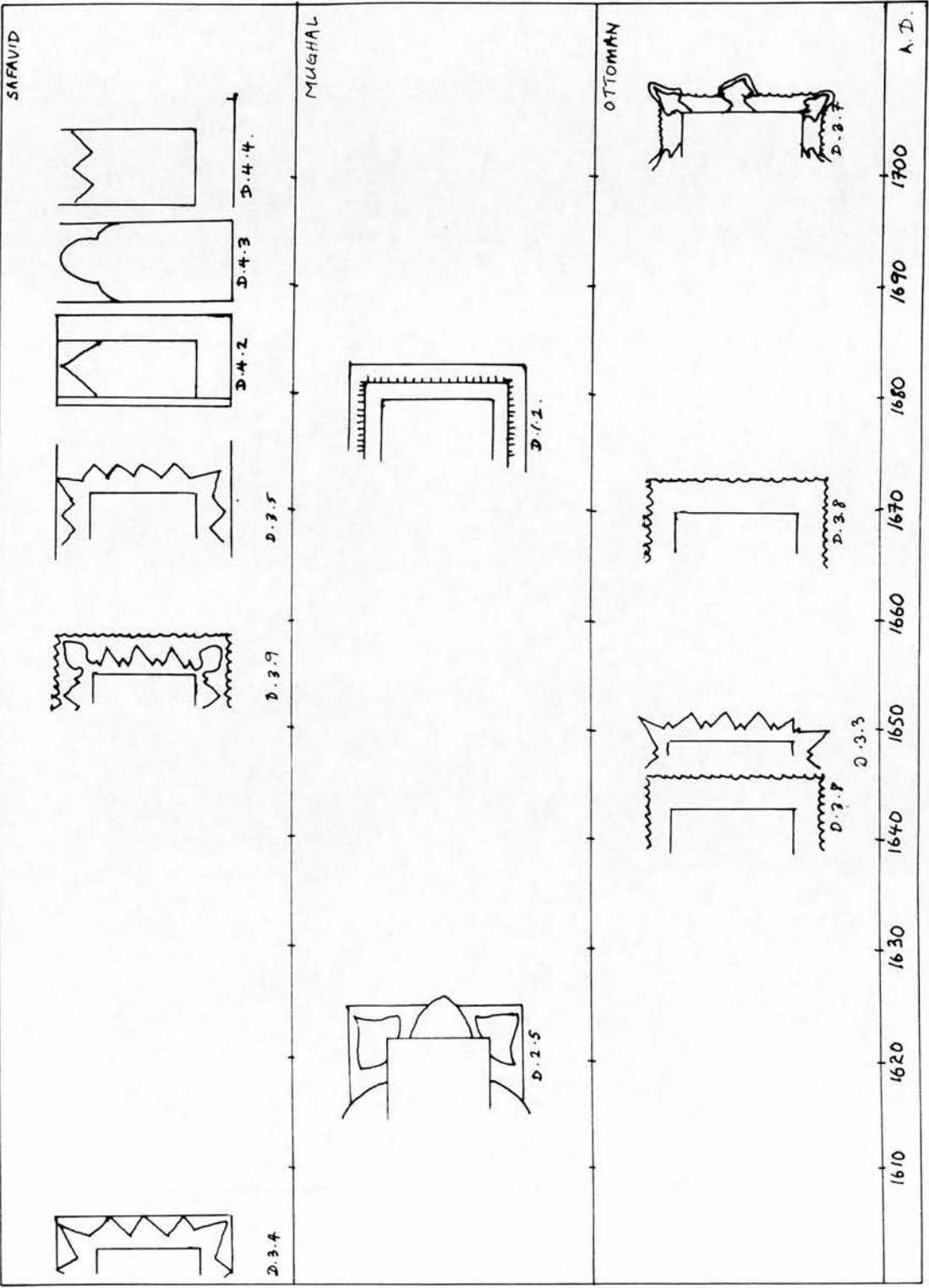


Fig. 1b. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman frame formats.



### 3.3. Text blocks<sup>89</sup>

Basically, the 16th- and 17th-century Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid text block is made up of two main designs: the tripartite design and the escutcheon or circular design (see Figs. 2a, 2b and 2c). These two main designs can be further subdivided into 4 types of text block, as follows:

- i. A vertical rectilinear text block with left and right decorative panels (B.1 design).
- ii. A vertical rectilinear text block with top and bottom decorative panels (B.2 design).
- iii. A vertical rectilinear text block with top decorative panel (B.3 design).
- iv. A circular and escutcheon-shaped text block with or without the horizontal rectilinear text block as well as left and right decorative panels (B.4 design).

#### Ottoman

Throughout the 16th and 17th century, the Ottoman Qur'ânic text block basically used the tripartite design. The texts are placed in a vertical rectilinear text block with left and right decorative panels. In Ottoman Qur'âns of the first half of the 16th century the B.1 design and its variants seem to be dominant (see Fig.2a). They can be identified by the two vertical decorative panels, left and right. These decorative panels consists of repeat patterns. An example of this (B.1) can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muṣṭafâ ibn Naṣûḥ al-Selânikî, dated 912/1506-7.<sup>90</sup> Another example is in a Qur'ân copied by Dervish Mehmed ibn Muṣṭafâ Dede ibn Ḥamdullâh. Istanbul,

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<sup>89</sup> The term 'text block' includes all the decorative panels or blocks surrounding it but excluding the panel for the *ʿunwân*. Sometimes there are also single escutcheon-shaped text blocks. All these designs are from the two illuminated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2.

<sup>90</sup> Khalili, QUR429. See James, *AT*, pl.55.

dated 958/1551<sup>91</sup> (see Fig. 2a). The B.1.3 design consists of decorative panels, each divided into two parts or lozenges to accommodate patterns (see Fig. 2a). Examples of this can be seen in a Qur'ân dated 938/1531-2<sup>92</sup> and in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad b. ʿAbdullâh al-Nishâpûrî and dated 948/1541.<sup>93</sup>

The second half of the 16th century sees Ottoman Qur'âns using three main designs for the text block: variants of B.1. (B.1.2, and B.1.4), B.2, and B.4. The B.1.2 design consists of one lozenge while B.1.4 consists of three lozenges<sup>94</sup> in each of the decorative panels. The B.1.2 design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by ʿAbdullâh al-Qirîmî<sup>95</sup> dated 973/1565-66 and in another Qur'ân copied by Ḥassan<sup>96</sup> and dated 996/1587. In the B.2 design, additional panels were added at the top and bottom of the text block (see Fig. 2b). Within these panels are two lozenges to accommodate patterns. An example can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Dâwûd ibn ʿAbdullâh, dated 976/1577.<sup>97</sup> As for the B.4 design (see Fig. 2a), a circular frame within the text block accommodated the text. The decorative panels consist of two lozenges which are similar to the B.1.3 design. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî, dated 973/1565.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Khalili, QUR533. See James, *AT*, pl.57.

<sup>92</sup> Khalili, QUR82. See James, *AT*, pl.54.

<sup>93</sup> Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.

<sup>94</sup> Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 44. This Qur'ân was copied by Maḥmud ibn ʿAbd al-Walî al-Daftarî. Dated 1000/1591.

<sup>95</sup> Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 63.

<sup>96</sup> Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339.

<sup>97</sup> Khalili, QUR214. See James, *AT*, pl.60.

<sup>98</sup> Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.

Two types of text block designs can be found in 17th-century Ottoman Qur'âns: B.1.5 and B.3 (see Fig. 2c). The B.1.5 type, a variant of B.1, consists of not less than six lozenges in decorative panels. The text block remains at the centre in a vertical rectilinear shape. An example of this can be seen in an Ottoman Qur'ân<sup>99</sup> dated 1055/1645 and in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥâfîz ʿUthmân dated 1082/1671.<sup>100</sup> As for the B.3 design, a single decorative panel was placed at the top of the text block with two decorative panels flanking the text block. This particular design is rare and is apparently not found in 16th-century Ottoman Qur'âns. An example can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥâfîz ibn ʿAlî dated 1099/1687 (see Fig. 2c).<sup>101</sup>

## Mughal

The 16th-century Mughal text block falls under the B.1.2.1 type of design. The two decorative panels on the left and right hand sides of the rectilinear text block consist of lozenges with small escutcheon-shaped designs at the top and bottom. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî and dated 966/1558.<sup>102</sup> A similar type of decoration can also be found in the 17th century, as in the Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî<sup>103</sup> in 1092/1681 (B.2.1 design). This B.2.1 design contains an almost similar mode of decoration in its decorative panels. The decorative elements in the top and bottom panels are quite

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<sup>99</sup> Sotheby's, 17 October 1983, lot 289.

<sup>100</sup> Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.

<sup>101</sup> Christie's, 1 April 1982, lot 161.

<sup>102</sup> Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>103</sup> Sotheby's 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

similar to the Qur'ân of Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî.<sup>104</sup> But the two decorative side panels echo that of the B.1.4 design in a typical Ottoman Qur'ân (see B.1.4 in Fig.2b [Ottoman]). Another text block design is B.2.2, which has two horizontal top panels, one horizontal panel below the text block and a side panel. The horizontal top panels are of different sizes. The bigger panel at the top consists of a lozenge shape at the centre while the smaller panel consists of a simple geometric design. Two lozenges were also placed in the side panel. This Qur'ân was copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî and is dated 1037/1627 (see Fig. 2c).<sup>105</sup>

### Safavid

16th and 17th-century Safavid Qur'âns include all four major groups of text block design, plus many variants of certain groups:

- a). B.1.1, B.1.2.2 and B.1.5
- b). B.2.1
- c). B.3.1
- d). B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3 and B.4.4.

Safavid Qur'âns of the first half of the 16th century display only two of these types of text block design: B.1.2.2 and B.4.1. These two designs are of an entirely different style from that of the Ottoman B.1 and B.1.3 designs (see Fig. 2a). Although the basic tripartite concept is maintained, the internal decorative elements in Safavid decorative panels (see B.1.2.2) are different in that they use a diamond-shaped design in each decorative panel. This type of decorative panel is not found in Ottoman Qur'âns. An example can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by (Nûr al-Dîn) Muhammad

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<sup>104</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>105</sup> Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.



Husayn ibn Muḥyi (l-Dîn) al-Harâwî, probably made in Bukhârâ or Herât and dated 944-5/1537-8.<sup>106</sup> Another type of design is B.4.1 which has a horizontal escutcheon-shaped text block and overlapping semi-circles at both side. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>c</sup>î al-Shîrâzî, dated 952-3/1545-6.<sup>107</sup>

In the second half of the 16th century, the Safavid text block developed a wider range of designs: B.1.2.2, B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3 and B.4.4. Apparently, there seems to have been an inclination in Safavid Qur'âns towards producing the B.4 series of designs. This design type seems less popular in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns, except for one dated example of the B.4 type of design in an Ottoman Qur'ân<sup>108</sup> (see Fig. 2a) which has a circular text block. The Safavid B.4.2 design has an escutcheon shape for the text within the vertical rectilinear text block and uses the tripartite concept. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Husayn al-Shîrâzî, dated 961/1553.<sup>109</sup> As for the B.4.3 design, the title or *ḥunwân* of the *sûrah* was added within the text block<sup>110</sup> as a small horizontal lozenge panel. This is a new phenomenon and is rarely found in Ottoman or Mughal Qur'âns of the same period. Subsequently, it is not uncommon to find Safavid Qur'âns with an *ḥunwân* within the text block or with no *ḥunwân* at all<sup>111</sup> (see B.4.1 in Fig. 2b). An example of a Safavid

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<sup>106</sup> Khalili, QUR114. See James, *AT*, pl.33.

<sup>107</sup> Khalili, QUR111. James, *AT*, pl.39.

<sup>108</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45.

<sup>109</sup> See Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.

<sup>110</sup> See Qur'ân copied by Asadullâh ibn Muhammad al-Kashânî, dated 967/1560, in Christie's 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.

<sup>111</sup> See Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 69. This Qur'ân was copied by <sup>c</sup>Alî Riza al-Abbâsî from Qazwîn and is dated 995/1586-7.

Qur'ân with the *ʿumwân* written within the text block and not in a separate panel, as shown in B.4.3, can also be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî,<sup>112</sup> dated 972/1564-5. This design type is shown in B.4.4 (see Fig. 2b though the *ʿumwân* is not shown there) which has no decorative panels on its sides. The B.1.2.2 design in Safavid Qur'âns and B.1.2.1 in Mughal Qur'âns fall under the same design type (see Figs. 2a and 2b). The basic elements in their decorative panels are quite similar. Interestingly, both Qur'âns were produced at almost the same time, namely 967-8/1559 (Safavid)<sup>113</sup> and 966/1558 (Mughal).<sup>114</sup> This suggests the existence of a fashionable convention in design types in illuminated Qur'âns of the middle of the 16th century.

In the first half of the 17th century, the text block in Safavid Qur'âns continued to employ the B.1 series already used at the beginning of the 16th century (see Figs. 2a and 2c). The tripartite concept, too, continued to be used. There are some parallels in the decorative panels of the Safavid text block vis-à-vis the Ottoman type, as can be seen if one compares the Safavid type<sup>115</sup> B.1.5 with the Ottoman<sup>116</sup> B.1.5 in Fig. 2c. This suggests an atmosphere of shared conventions in visual

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<sup>112</sup> Khalili, QUR422. See James, *AT*, pl.45.

<sup>113</sup> Khalili, QUR3. See James, *AT*, pl.32. This Qur'an was copied by Aḥmad ibn Niḥmatallâh. It is dated 967-8/1559.

<sup>114</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>115</sup> See Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 35. This Qur'ân was copied by Muḥammad Mehdi al-Kâtib al-Mashhadî and is dated 1011/1602.

<sup>116</sup> See Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108. This Qur'ân was copied by Muṣṭafâ ibn Muḥammad, pupil of al-Balghrâdî, and is dated 1055/1645. Another comparable example can be seen in the Qur'ân copied by Ḥâfiz ʿUthmân, dated 1082/1671, in Sotheby's 20 November 1986, lot 326.

vocabularies between the Safavid and Ottoman schools. Likewise, in the second half of the 17th century, a similar situation can be found between Safavid and Mughal. The B.2.1 design seems to have occurred in both Safavid as well as Mughal Qur'âns, and this time in the overall design is very similar in both schools. An example of a Safavid B.2.1 design is in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Zaman al-Ḥusainî al-Kirmânî, dated 1076-77/1665-66.<sup>117</sup> A comparable Mughal B.2.1 design is in a Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî and dated 1092/1681.<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, comparable examples of a Safavid B.3.1 design and an Ottoman<sup>119</sup> B.3. design can also be found (see Fig.2c). Both designs have a decorative panel on top of the side panels and the text block. A Safavid example can be found in a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Hâshim (al-Tayir), dated 1100/1688.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, this concept of using three side panels also exists in a Mughal Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî in 1037/1627 (B.2.2 design), but in a different way: that is, one side panel, two top panels and one bottom panel.<sup>121</sup> The conclusion that imposes itself on the basis of the details presented above is that despite a shared basic framework (notably in the tripartite format) between all three schools, the Safavid school distinguishes itself by its preference for a curvilinear surround for the text block, the inclusion of the *ʿumwân* within the text block rather than above it, and a greater readiness for overall experimentation in the layout of the page.

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<sup>117</sup> Christie's, 27 April 1993, lot 34.

<sup>118</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

<sup>119</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 225.

<sup>120</sup> See Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.

<sup>121</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

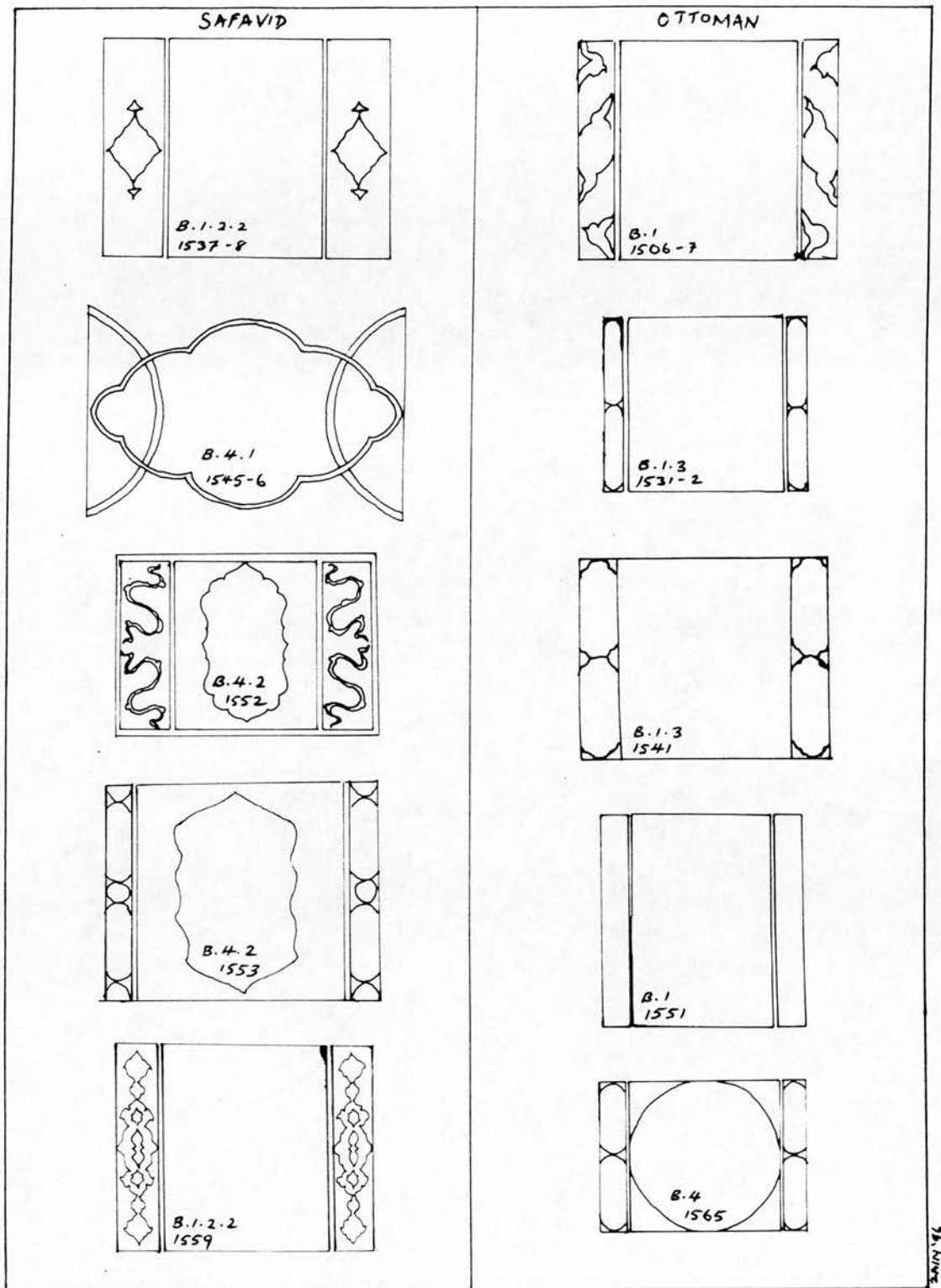


Fig. 2a. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman text block designs.



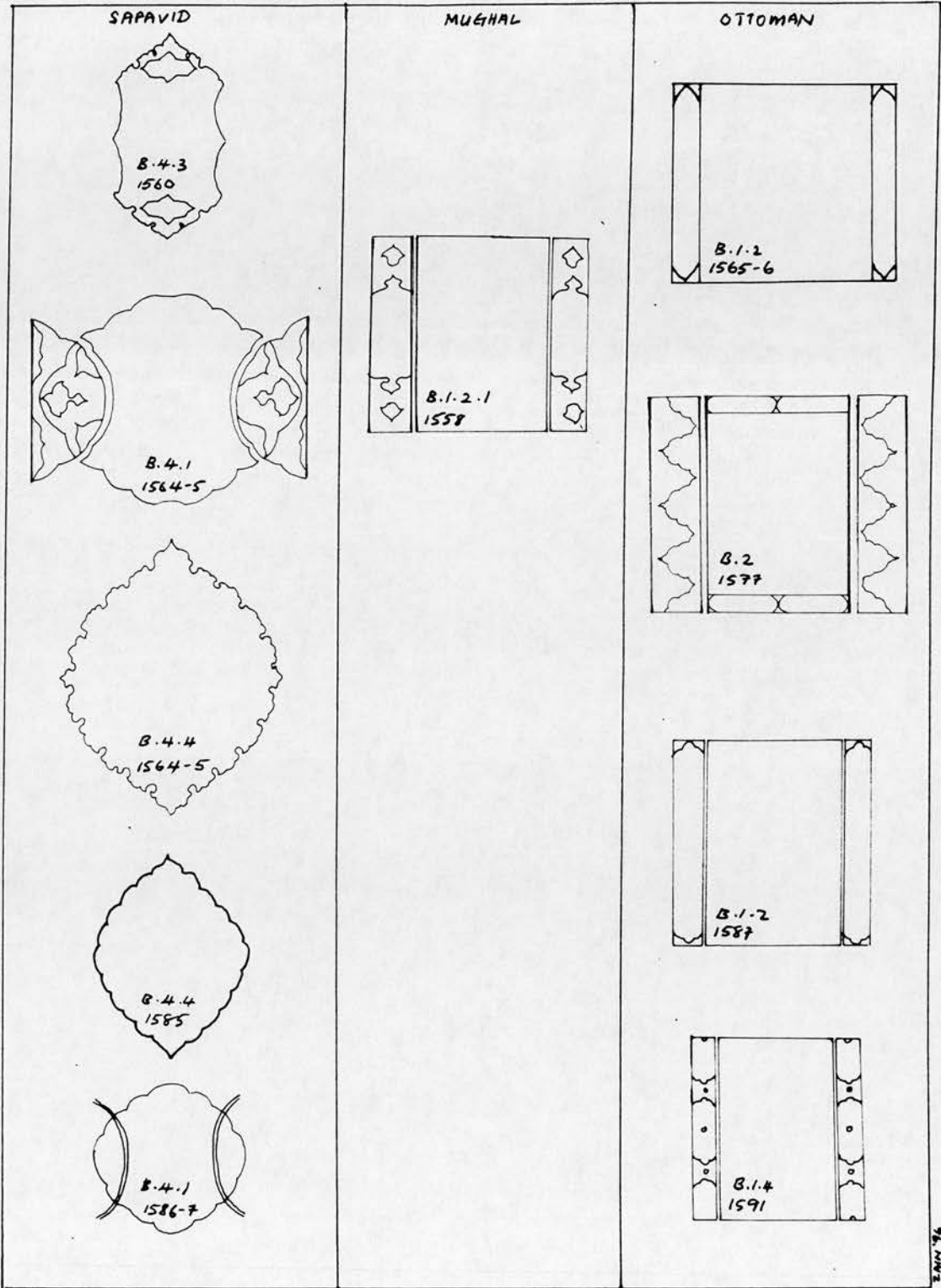


Fig. 2b. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman text block designs.

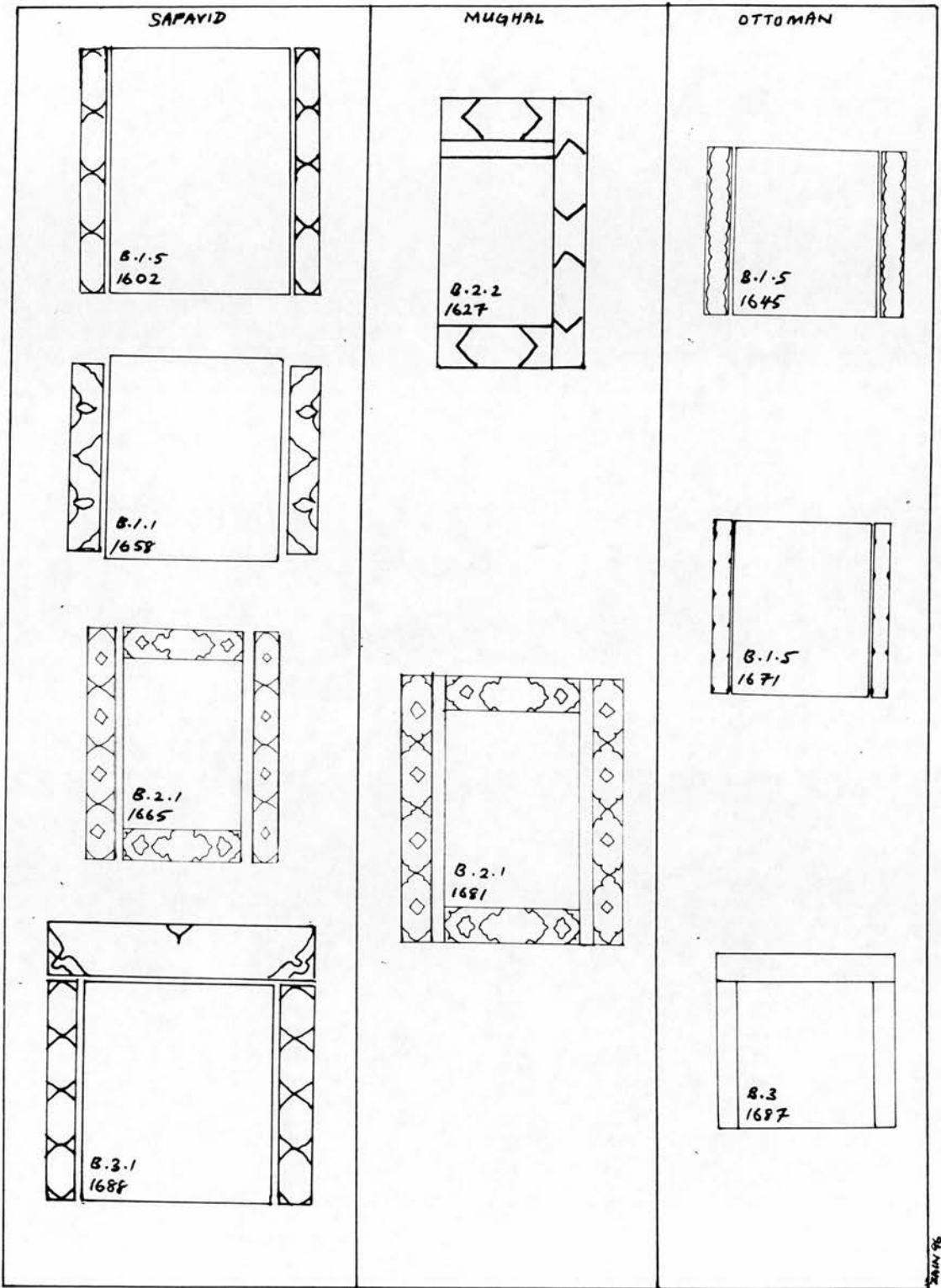


Fig. 2c. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman text block designs.

### 3.4. *Unwans*

The development of the *unwân*<sup>122</sup> can be seen in its basic structure. The *unwân* is typically built upon geometric structures such as the rectangle, rhombus, triangle, octagon, ellipse and circle. The concentration is at the centre where the heading is written. Other subsidiary geometric shapes surrounding it will act to form variants on a particular design. These basic structures are as follows:

- i. *Unwân* with diamond shape at the centre (U.1 design).
- ii. *Unwân* with lozenge shape at the centre (U.2 design).
- iii. *Unwân* with octagonal shape at the centre (U.3 design).
- iv. *Unwân* with ellipse shape at the centre (U.4 design).
- v. *Unwân* with a square overlapping the lozenge (U.5 design).

### Ottoman

In the first half of the 16th century, two types of *unwân* design can be found in Ottoman Qur'âns: the U.1 and U.2 designs (see Fig. 3a). The U.1 design consists of a diamond shape at the centre and a triangle at each side (U.1 design). Muṣṭafâ ibn Naṣûḥ al-Selânikî used this U.1 design in his *unwân*. This Qur'ân was copied in 912/1506-7.<sup>123</sup> As for the U.2 design, the area for the heading is now of lozenge shape while the side remains the same as that of the U.1 design. This design can be

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<sup>122</sup> In a single volume of illuminated Qur'âns, there can be as many as 114 *unwâns* to mark the beginning of each *sûrah*. The concentration here is only on the illuminated pages of *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2.

<sup>123</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.55.

seen in a Qur'ân dated 938/1531-2 in the Khalili collection.<sup>124</sup> Besides these designs, one can also detect variants in the *ḥunwân* design. The *ḥunwân* of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullâh al-Nishâpûrî,<sup>125</sup> dated 948/1541, is a variant of U.1; thus, it is categorised as U.1.1 design. The U.1.1 design has a diamond shape at the centre enclosed in a lozenge shape but without any triangular shapes at each side. This U.1.1 design appears again in ʿAbdullâh al-Qirîmî's<sup>126</sup> Qur'ân, dated 973/1565-66.

In the second half of the 16th century, further changes took place with the introduction of four more new designs: U.3, U.1.1, U.4 and U.5 (see Fig. 3a). The *ḥunwân* of Dervish Meḥmed ibn Muṣṭafâ Dede ibn Hamdullâh from Istanbul (958/1551) has an octagonal shape at the centre.<sup>127</sup> This is a U.3 design which still maintains the two triangular shapes as depicted in U.1 and U.2. An *ḥunwân* with an ellipse shape at the centre (of U.4 design) can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Dâwûd ibn ʿAbdullâh in the year 985/1577.<sup>128</sup> In between the ellipse and triangular shape, a small circular shape was added. Another example of *ḥunwân* design can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Ḥassan in the year 996/1587, which has a square overlapping the lozenge (U.5.3 design). This design is without any triangular or circular shape at each side of the *ḥunwân*.

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.54.

<sup>125</sup> See Christie's, 16 June 1987, lot 86.

<sup>126</sup> See Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 36.

<sup>127</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.57.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.60.



The *ʿunwân* design in 17th-century Ottoman Qurʾâns favours variants of the U.2 design formulated in the 16th century. The *ʿunwân* of an Ottoman Qurʾân<sup>129</sup> dated 1055/1645 is in a U.2.7 design (see Fig. 3b). This U.2.7 design has a double lozenge shape with 'arms'. By the early 18th century, this double lozenge became a single lozenge (see U.2.7.1 design).<sup>130</sup> Further variants of the U.2 design are created by adding small triangular shapes facing away from the lozenge (see U.2.4 in Fig. 3b). An example of this can be seen in a Qurʾân copied by Ḥâfîẓ ʿUthmân and dated 1082/1671.<sup>131</sup> Another variant is the U.2.3.1 design which has a small circle placed in between the lozenge and the triangular shapes.<sup>132</sup>

## Mughal

The *ʿunwân* of the 16th-century Mughal Qurʾân in Fig. 3a has a U.5.1 design. The centre has a diamond overlapping the lozenge shape and a small diamond shape at each side. These two elements are enclosed in a bigger lozenge shape.<sup>133</sup> In the 17th century, a single lozenge shape design in the *ʿunwân* can also be found in a Qurʾân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî and dated 1037/1627.<sup>134</sup> Another *ʿunwân* design was introduced in Mughal Qurʾâns, namely the U.2.5 design. A

<sup>129</sup> See Sotheby's, 17 October 1983, lot 289.

<sup>130</sup> Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240.

<sup>131</sup> See Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.

<sup>132</sup> See Sotheby's, 15 April 1985, lot 225.

<sup>133</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>134</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47.

basically similar concept was used but with slight changes. The central lozenge is placed within the bigger lozenge shape, with a triangular shape at each side (see U.2.5 in Fig 3b).<sup>135</sup>

## Safavid

Two groups of *ḥunwân* design can be found in 16th-century Safavid Qur'âns. They are of the U.5 and U.2 groups or variants of them. Whereas in the first half of the 16th century Ottoman Qur'âns preferred diamond and lozenge shapes with two triangles facing inward, the situation is slightly different in Safavid designs. A 'square placed on its points and overlapping a lozenge' with two triangles facing outward (see U.5 in Fig. 3a) seems to be the favoured design for Safavid *ḥunwâns*.<sup>136</sup> A variant of this U.5 design can be seen in a Mughal Qur'ân dated 966/1558 (see U.5.1, Fig. 3a).<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, in this period, other variants such as U.2.1 (dated 960/1552),<sup>138</sup> U.5.2 (dated 961/1553)<sup>139</sup> and U.5.4 (dated 967-8/1559)<sup>140</sup> designs can also be found in Safavid Qur'âns (see Fig. 3a). The U.5.3 design<sup>141</sup> can also be found in an

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<sup>135</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

<sup>136</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.33.

<sup>137</sup> Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>138</sup> Example of a Safavid Qur'ân with U.2.1 design, see James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>139</sup> Example of a Safavid Qur'ân with U.5.1 design, see Christie's, 23 April 19981, lot 100.

<sup>140</sup> Example of a Safavid Qur'ân with U.5.4 design, see James, *AT*, pl.32.

<sup>141</sup> Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 339.

Ottoman Qur'ân dated 996/1587. All this suggests that a shared convention or interest in variants of the U.5 design<sup>142</sup> existed in all three imperial schools in the 16th century.

In 17th-century Safavid Qur'âns, the *ḥunwân* designs employ variants of U.2 and U.5. The Ottomans and Mughals too, seem to have used the U.2 series in their *ḥunwâns* (see Fig.3b). Safavid artists of the first half of the 17th century used the U.2.3 design (as in a Qur'ân dated 1602 A.D.)<sup>143</sup> whereas the Ottomans used the U.2.7 design (as in a Qur'ân dated 1055/1645).<sup>144</sup> This Safavid U.2.3 design of 1011/1602 recalls the U.2 design dated 938-9/1531-2 in an Ottoman Qur'ân.<sup>145</sup> In other words, an arrangement commonly found in Ottoman 16th-century Qur'âns turns up only in the following century in Safavid work. Two triangular shapes face the lozenge shape at the centre of the *ḥunwân*. In the second half of the 17th century, these triangular shapes were so designed as to face away from the lozenge shape at the centre, as in a Safavid *ḥunwân* of U.2.4 type dated 1069/1658<sup>146</sup> and U.2.5 type dated 1076/1665. This U.2.4 type of design can also be found at almost the same period in Ottoman Qur'âns (e.g. an example dated 1082/1671).<sup>147</sup> Similarly, the U.2.5 type of design can also be found at about the same period in Mughal Qur'âns, e.g. an example dated 1092/1681.<sup>148</sup> There are three more designs found in Safavid

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<sup>142</sup>Khalili, QUR114. See James, *AT*, pl.33.

<sup>143</sup> See Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 35.

<sup>144</sup> See Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108.

<sup>145</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.54.

<sup>146</sup> See Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.

<sup>147</sup> See Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.

<sup>148</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

Qur'âns of the second half of the 17th century: the U.5.7 (in a Qur'ân dated 1083-4/1672-3),<sup>149</sup> the U.2.6 design (in a Qur'ân dated 1100/1688)<sup>150</sup> and the U.5.6 design (in a Qur'ân dated 1096-7/1684-5).<sup>151</sup> The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that, so far as *cunwâns* are concerned — and only *cunwâns* — Safavid artists, after an experimental period in the 16th century, seem to have run out of inspiration in the 17th century and to have begun to borrow ideas from their counterparts, especially the Ottomans.

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<sup>149</sup> See Christie's, 23-25 April 1991, lot 65.

<sup>150</sup> See Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 260.

<sup>151</sup> See Christie's, 12 April 1988, lot 72.







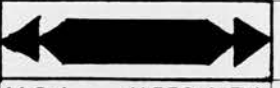













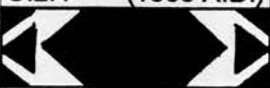


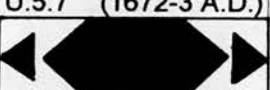

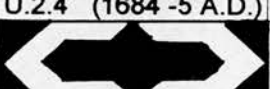

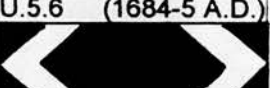

16th century <sup>c</sup> Unwân		
Safavid	Mughal	Ottoman
		
		U.1 (1506-7 A.D.)
		
U.5 (1537-8 A.D.)		U.2 (1531-2 A.D.)
		
		U.1.1 (1541 A.D.)
		
U.2.1 (1552 A.D.)		U.3 (1551 A.D.)
		
U.5.2 (1553 A.D.)		
		
U.5.4 (1559 A.D.)	U.5.1 (1558 A.D.)	
		
		U.1 (1565 A.D.)
		
		U.1.1 (1565-6 A.D.)
		
		U.4 (1577 A.D.)
		
		U.5.3 (1587 A.D.)
		
		U.1 (1591 A.D.)

Fig. 3a. The basic structure of <sup>c</sup>unwân design

17th century <i>Unwân</i>		
Safavid	Mughal	Ottoman
		
U.2.3 (1602 A.D.)		
	U.2.7.2 (1627 A.D.)	U.2.7 (1645 A.D.)
		
U.2.4 (1658 A.D.)		
		
U.2.5 (1665 A.D.)		
		
U.5.7 (1672-3 A.D.)		U.2.4 (1671 A.D.)
		
U.2.4 (1684 -5 A.D.)	U.2.5 (1681 A.D.)	
		
U.5.6 (1684-5 A.D.)		U.2.3.1 (1687 A.D.)
		
U.2.6 (1688 A.D.)		
		
		U.2.7.1 (1719 A.D.)

76. m. 12

Fig. 3b. The basic structure of *Unwân* design.

### 3.5. Scripts

In Muslim civilisation, writing became a sacred religious symbol of the first order<sup>152</sup> because of its relationship with the Qur'ân. Many different styles of writing were invented by Muslims for this purpose, and different regions produced different style of writing. Nevertheless, not every script invented by Muslims was accepted for the Qur'ân; indeed only a few were so chosen, including Kufic, *naskh*, *thuluth*, *muhaqqaq*, *riqâ'î*, *nastâ'liq*, *rayhân*, *tawqî'î* and *ghubârî*. The most commonly used scripts after the 11th century were *naskh*, *thuluth* and *muhaqqaq*.<sup>153</sup> Geographically, there are also differences in the style of writing such as the *maghribî*, *bihârî* and *şînî*<sup>154</sup> scripts, and these are confined to their local areas. On the other hand there are examples of *nastâ'liq* script Qur'âns from areas outside Iran. Qur'âns written in this scripts are very rare even in Iran; the major example is perhaps the Qur'ân copied by Shâh Mahmûd al-Nîsâpûrî, dated 945/1538-9 and probably from Tabrîz.<sup>155</sup> An example of *nastâ'liq* script used by a Mughal artist can be seen in an album page containing *Sûrah al-Fâtihah*, signed by Muhammad Rahîm, and datable ca. 1680 A.D.,<sup>156</sup> and the present study has also turned up a solitary late 16th-century Ottoman Qur'ân in *nastâ'liq* script. The scribe's name is not known. This particular

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<sup>152</sup> F. Rosenthal, "Significant Uses of Arabic Writing," *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 4 (1961), 17.

<sup>153</sup> See Chapter 8 and lists of Qur'âns from the Christie's and Sotheby's catalogues (1973-1993) in the Appendix.

<sup>154</sup> Example of Chinese Qur'ân in *şînî* script can be seen in Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot. 36, and also in 28 April 1993, lot 100.

<sup>155</sup> Istanbul, Topkapi Saray Library, HS 25. See Lings, *QACI*, pl.91.

<sup>156</sup> Sotheby's, 26 April 1991, lot 229.

Qur'ân was published in the Sotheby's catalogue dated 19th April 1983, lot 172, but was unfortunately not illustrated.

To differentiate a Safavid Qur'ân from an Ottoman or Mughal one on the basis of scripts alone is of course a tricky task. This is because these three schools used similar types of script in their Qur'âns.<sup>157</sup> The script used for the text alone can be divided into three groups: single-script Qur'âns, two-script Qur'âns and three-script Qur'âns (see Table A i, ii and iii).

### 16th century

In 16th-century Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns, the *naskh* script was commonly used for the main text (see Table A, i.). However, for Qur'âns that used a combination of scripts for the main text, the pairing *naskh* and *thuluth* was most preferred (see Table A, ii). Furthermore, this study shows that Qur'âns using a combination of three scripts — *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth* — were used in Safavid Qur'âns, but none occur in either the Ottoman or the Mughal school (see Table A, iii). In terms of percentage (see Table C, i), about 81% of Ottoman Qur'âns and 80% of Mughal Qur'âns use a single script for the main text. As for Safavid Qur'âns, about 52% use a single script, 38% use a combination of two scripts and 10% use a combination of three scripts. This suggests that Safavid artists were much more versatile and innovative than their counterparts.

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<sup>157</sup> See lists of Qur'âns in the Christie's and Sotheby's catalogues in the Appendix.



## 17th century

The situation in the 17th century is slightly different. Only two customs were followed for the main text: a single script throughout and a combination of two scripts. The combination of three scripts seems to have been discarded. Almost all Mughal Qur'âns are in the *naskh* script. The Ottomans, however introduced *ghubârî* script for the main text of the Qur'ân. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Sha<sup>h</sup>ban ibn Muḥammad, dated 1043/1633 <sup>158</sup> The use of *muḥaqqaq* for the main text can still be found in Safavid Qur'âns but not in Ottoman and Mughal ones. As for the use of a combination of two scripts (see B, ii), the combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts was still the favourite one among Safavid calligraphers. Next in popularity was the combination of *muḥaqqaq* and the *nastā'liq*. This again suggests that Safavid artists were fonder than their neighbours of using a combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts in the main text of the Qur'ân. 40% of their Qur'âns use the two-scripts technique and 60% use a single script only (see C, ii). These various developments can best be studied in tabular form, and such tables are accordingly presented below. One word of warning is perhaps relevant here: the diagnostic features which might serve to construct a chronology of Safavid Qur'âns have not yet been established. It is therefore premature confidently to suggest dates for undated Safavid Qur'âns. It almost follows from this that the gap between 98 "16th century" and 10 "17th century" Qur'âns is likely to be narrower than this, and that some 17th-century Qur'âns have been erroneously included among the 16th-century ones. To disentangle this chronology is a major task of future research.

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<sup>158</sup> Sotheby's, 4 April 1989, lot 206.

## A. 16th century

### i). Single-script Qur'âns

Scripts	Safavid	Ottoman	Mughal
<i>naskh</i>	44	35	3
<i>muḥaqqaq</i>	6	7	1
<i>nastâ lîq</i>	1	1	
total:	51	43	4

### ii). Two-script Qur'âns

Scripts	Safavid	Ottoman	Mughal
<i>naskh + thuluth</i>	25	5	1
<i>muḥaqqaq + thuluth</i>	2	0	0
<i>naskh + muḥaqqaq</i>	7	4	0
<i>thuluth + riqâ'</i>	1	0	0
<i>rayhan + muḥaqqaq</i>	1	0	0
<i>thuluth + tawqî'</i>	1	0	0
total:	37	9	1

### iii). Three-script Qur'âns

Scripts	Safavid	Ottoman	Mughal
<i>naskh + muḥaqqaq + riqâ'</i>	1	1	0
<i>thuluth + naskh + nastâ lîq</i>	1	0	0
<i>muḥaqqaq + naskh + thuluth</i>	6	0	0
<i>naskh + muḥaqqaq + nastâ lîq</i>	1	0	0
<i>naskh + nastâ lîq + thuluth</i>	1	0	0
total:	10	1	0

Table A i, ii & iii. Types of scripts used in the main text of the 16th-century Qur'âns.

## B. 17th century.

### i). Single-script Qur'âns

Scripts	Safavid	Ottoman	Mughal
<i>naskh</i>	5	37	18
<i>muḥaqqaq</i>	1	0	0
<i>ghubârî</i>	0	1	0
total:	6	38	18

### ii). Two-script Qur'âns

Scripts	Safavid	Ottoman	Mughal
<i>naskh + thuluth</i>	3	0	0
<i>muḥaqqaq + nastâ lîq</i>	1	1	0
total:	4	1	0

Table B. i and ii. Types of scripts used in the main text of the 17th-century Qur'âns.

## C.

### i). 16th century

16th-century Qur'âns	Total	Percentage		
		1 script	2 scripts	3 scripts
Safavid	98	52%	38%	10%
Ottoman	53	81%	17%	2%
Mughal	5	80%	20%	0%

### ii). 17th century

17th-century Qur'âns	Total	Percentage		
		1 script	2 scripts	3 scripts
Safavid	10	60%	40%	0%
Ottoman	39	97%	3%	0%
Mughal	18	100%	0%	0%

Table C. i & ii. Percentages in the usage of scripts for the main text of the 16th-17th centuries Qur'âns.

The Safavid style is thus revealed in part by the popularity of two — or three scripts Qur'âns. Most Safavid calligraphers, like their Ottoman and Mughal counterparts, used *naskh* script (see A, i and B, i), but it was the combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts (see A, ii and B, ii), and the combination of *muhaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth* (see A, iii) that set their Qur'âns apart. It is, however, not enough to rely solely on this evidence in order to identify the Safavid style, although it may be said that the presence of more than one script is a strong indication that the Qur'ân in question is Safavid. Other factors must be taken into consideration before arriving at any conclusion concerning style.

### 3.6. The *âyah*-markers

#### 3.6.1. The placement of *âyah*-markers

Another identifiable feature of the Safavid style can be seen in the *âyah*-marker itself. The *âyah*-markers in Safavid Qur'âns were normally placed slightly above the "hidden line" of the script within the text block (see Fig. 4 a, where this "hidden line" — a notional idea only — is marked as sequence of dashes). They are consistent both in design and location vis-à-vis the line of text throughout the Qur'ân. Usually, Safavid Qur'âns have one or two designs for *âyah*-markers, but not more than two designs are ever depicted, and when two are depicted, it is in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 of the Qur'ân. One example of this can be seen in a single-volume Qur'ân in the Khalili collection from Shîrâz or Qazwîn dated 959/1552,<sup>159</sup> another is in a large Safavid Qur'ân dated 1069/1658.<sup>160</sup> In this particular Qur'ân, the

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<sup>159</sup> Khalili, QUR 729. See James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>160</sup> Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222.



first *âyah*-marker in *Sûrah* 1 has a different pattern from all the other *âyah*-markers. After this first *âyah*-marker the others are much simpler in design. Safavid *âyah*-markers can also vary in term of design and size. An example of a minute size of *âyah*-marker can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library.<sup>161</sup> The floral *âyah*-marker in this Qur'ân is placed above the hidden line for the script.

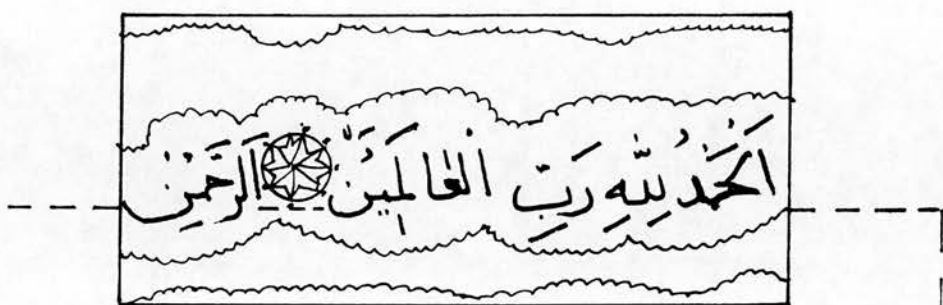
In comparison, a given Ottoman artist might use up to six different types and sizes of *âyah*-marker in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning part of *Sûrah* 2 of the Qur'âns. Muḥammad ʿĀrif al-Rajâʾî, the pupil of Aḥmad al-Ḥamdî,<sup>162</sup> uses six different patterns of *âyah*-markers in *Sûrah* 1, and they are of different sizes. This Qur'ân dated 1174/1760. The *âyah*-markers occur immediately after every *âyah* the hidden lines for the script cut right across the centre of the *âyah*-markers (see Fig. 4, b). The Mughal style of *âyah*-markers, on the other hands, seems to echo that of the Safavids, especially in placement and patterns. However, there is a slight distinction in the placement of the Mughal *âyah*-marker<sup>163</sup> which is slightly higher than Safavid practice allows, and of course much higher than the Ottoman placing (see Fig. 4, c). Sometimes, both Safavid and Mughal *âyah*-markers are placed on roughly the same hidden line for the script. If this happens, one has to rely on other features in order to differentiate them, such as colour, format, floral motifs and marginal designs. All these differences can best be identified in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning part of *Sûrah* 2 of the Qur'ân.

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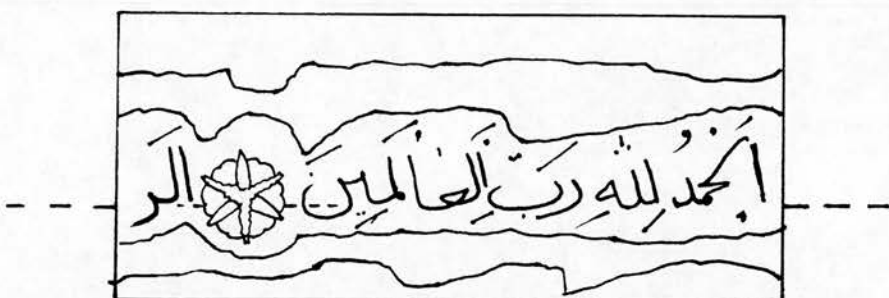
<sup>161</sup> CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry No. 162). See Lings, *QACI*, pl.90.

<sup>162</sup> Christie's, 24 April 1980, lot 96.

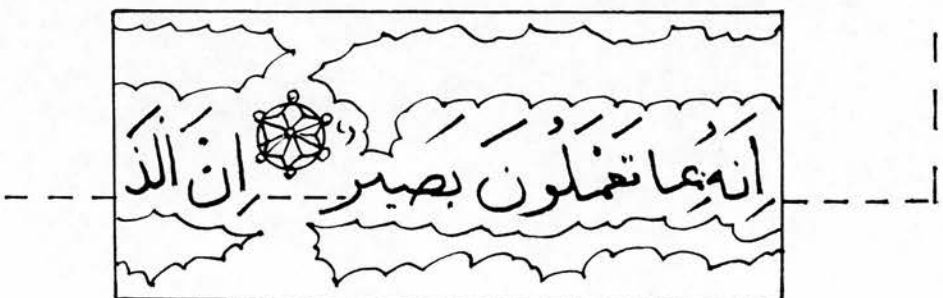
<sup>163</sup> Sotheby's, 22-23 October 1992, lot 581.



a. Safavid Qur'ân, dated 1069/1658. Sotheby's 12 October 1990, Lot 222.



b. Ottoman Qur'ân, dated 1174/1760. Christie's 24 April 1980, Lot 96.



c. Mughal Qur'ân, ca. 1590. Sotheby's 22-23 October 1992, Lot 581.

Hidden margin line within the text block.

Fig. 4 a, b and c. The placement of the *âyah*-marker in the Qur'ân.

### 3.6.2. Repetitive designs in *âyah*-markers

Inter-regional influences result in repetitive or overlapping designs in *âyah*-markers. Usually, this choice of the same design in all three regional styles involves the most simple design; hence its wide use among artists from all three empires. This suggests the existence of a standard illuminated Qur'ân, a kind of blueprint, or at least an acceptance of standard elements in the programme of illumination. Anything extra in the design of the *âyah*-marker, would mean a special request and obviously such extra tasks would cost more. The use of simple *âyah*-marker design, then, would suggest a speedy and less expensive job. Close study shows that at least two basic designs were widely used by artists from these three empires. Slight variants of these two designs can easily be detected. In fact, these two designs are not new and already existed prior to the 16th century, for example in a Qur'ân attributed to Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>simî, probably made in Iraq or Iran datable ca. 1250-1450 A.D.<sup>164</sup> The *âyah*-marker design in this particular Qur'ân is a variant of type 'A' design (see Fig. 5). Another example is in part 28 of a 30-part Qur'ân from Sinjar or Nisibin, folio 34b and datable ca. 1198-1219 A.D.,<sup>165</sup> the *âyah*-marker is similar to the type 'B' design (see Fig. 6). These are, therefore, established designs and were widely used by later generations. Later Qur'âns with these designs include:

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<sup>164</sup> Khalili, QUR30. See James, *MS*, pl.12. The date was given by James because the existence of folios from a later addition.

<sup>165</sup> Khalili, QUR497. See James, *MS*, pl.7. According to James, this Qur'ân was made for the library (*khizânah*) of the Zangid prince Qutb al-Dîn Abû'l-Muzaffar Muḥammad ibn Zangî ibn Mawdud ibn Zangî ibn Aqsunqur, who succeeded his father, <sup>c</sup>Imâd al-Dîn Zangî ibn Mawdud, as ruler of Sinjar, Khabur and Nisibin in the Jazirah in 1198 and ruled until 1219.

A.

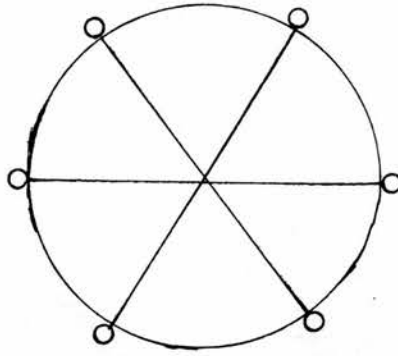


Fig. 5. Popular *ayah*-marker design (type A)

### Safavid

- 1). Sotheby's, 11 October 1982, lot 186. Dated 1096/1684.
- 2). Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 341. Late 16th century.
- 3). Khalili, QUR323. Herât, ca. 1490-1510 A.D.
- 4). Khalili, QUR729. Shîrâz. Dated 959/1552.
- 5). CBL Ms. 1538 (Arberry no. 160), 16th century.
- 6). CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163), 16th century.
- 7). CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry no. 174), 17th century.

### Mughal

- 1). Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 226. Dated 1100/1688.

### Ottoman

- 1). Christie's, 21 November 1986, lot 102. datable ca. 1600 A.D.
- 2). Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 79. Dated 1125/1713-1714.
- 3). Sotheby's, 10 April 1989, lot 223. Mid-16th century.
- 4). Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 108. Dated 1055/1645.
- 5). Khalili, QUR289 & QUR229, ca. 1450-1500 A.D.
- 6). TKS EH. 49. Dated 964/1556-7.
- 7). S.Y.Y. 999. Dated 953/1546-7.



**B.**

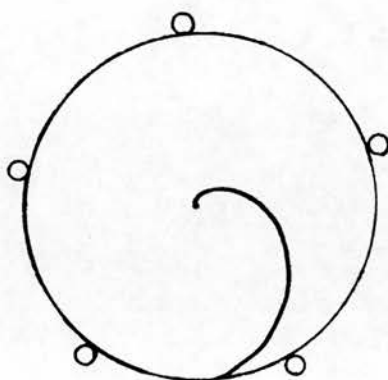


Fig. 6. Popular *âyah*-marker design (type B)

**Safavid**

- 1). Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 255. Dated 934/1527.
- 2). Sotheby's, 25 June 1985, lot 20. Early 16th century.
- 3). Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 342. Early 17th century.
- 4). Sotheby's, 12 October 1990, lot 222. Dated 1069/1658.
- 5). CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry no. 155). Dated 982-3/1574-5.
- 6). CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry no. 157). 16th century.
- 7). CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158). 16th century.
- 8). CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry no. 163). 16th century.
- 9). CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry no. 164). Late 16th century.
- 10). CBL Ms. 1554 (Arberry no. 172). Dated 1084/1673.

**Ottoman**

- 1). Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 225. Dated 1099/1687.
- 2). Sotheby's, 28 April 1993, lot 102. Dated 1128/1715.
- 3). Christie's, 21 November 1986, lot 115. ca. 1550 A.D.

### 3.6.3. Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal *âyah*-marker design

In Figs. 7a and 7b, the first column on the left deals with Ottoman Qur'âns, the second column with Safavid Qur'âns and the third column with Mughal Qur'âns. Ottoman *âyah*-markers are rather bold in their design. Some of their prominent features may be noted briefly. Firstly, the presence of minute plant motifs drawn at the outer ring of the *âyah*-marker as shown in no. 1, no. 2 and no. 3 in Fig. 7a. Secondly, the beautifully drawn flower motifs at the centre of the *âyah*-markers; these are full of detail. Thirdly, the tendency to depict an exotic design, such as the flame-like motif shown in no. 4. On the other hand, designs in the Mughal period seem less complex and can be easily executed. According to Gombrich, an organic design is much easier to execute than a geometric design and such a preference for organic design is therefore natural if rapid execution is the aim.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, during the period of Jahângîr, flower motifs seem to have been greatly favoured, and this was also reflected in works from the royal atelier.<sup>167</sup> The small circles at the outer ring of the *âyah*-markers seem to appear less frequently in Mughal work (see Fig. 7b, no.5-8).

Some of these characteristics differ from those of the Safavid period. The designs for *âyah*-markers in Safavid Qur'âns are well controlled — neither exotic, as is seen occasionally in Ottoman work, nor simplified as in the Mughal period (see Fig. 7a and Fig. 7b). But it is apparently not possible to go much further than this. Rather does the evidence suggest the frequent use of a shared formula in design of *âyah*-markers in all three schools. This can be seen in all the examples labelled no. 1 (read

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<sup>166</sup> See E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order* (Oxford, 1979), 159.

<sup>167</sup> Verma, *Mughal*, 5.

horizontally) given in Fig. 7a. There are in fact many other cases of *âyah*-markers which occur in all three traditions and therefore do not appear in Figs. 7a-b. When such overlap is encountered, especially in an unsigned or undated Qur'ân, it is necessary to have recourse to other evidence in order to determine its style and provenance. The most common designs in general use in all traditions are: the plain round *âyah*-markers (see no. 1 in Fig. 7a in Chapter 3); the simple flower motif with or without some small circles around it (see no. 2 in Fig. 5a in Chapter 3); and the *âyah*-marker with an internal single semi-circular line to the centre, again with or without small circles at the outer ring [see Fig. 7b (i) in Chapter 3]. There are no examples of a flame-like design (see no. 4 [Ottoman] Fig. 7a), or a multi-layered flower-type design (see no. 7 [Ottoman] Fig. 7b) in the *âyah*-markers of Safavid and Mughal Qur'âns. It will be clear from this discussion that the degree of overlap between all three schools is such that one cannot identify exclusively Safavid designs. The most that can be done is to use either exotic or simplified designs as a diagnostic clue to Ottoman or Mughal provenance respectively.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> In the survey conducted, the *âyah*-markers in Fig. 7a and 7b can only be found each respective schools. Close study reveals that, only six different types of *âyah*-marker were identified as belonging to the Safavid and the Mughal schools.

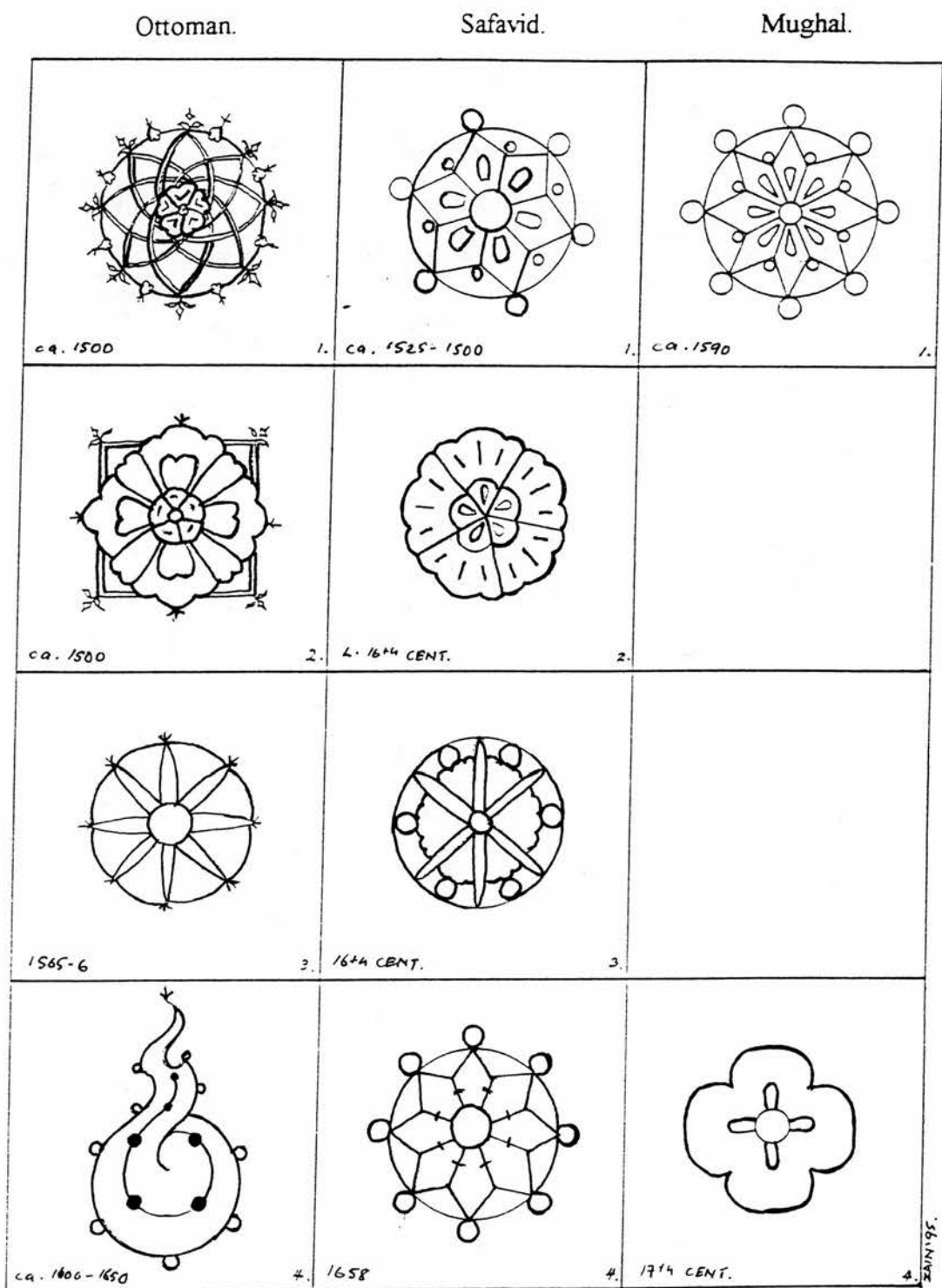


Fig. 7a. Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal *âyah*-marker.



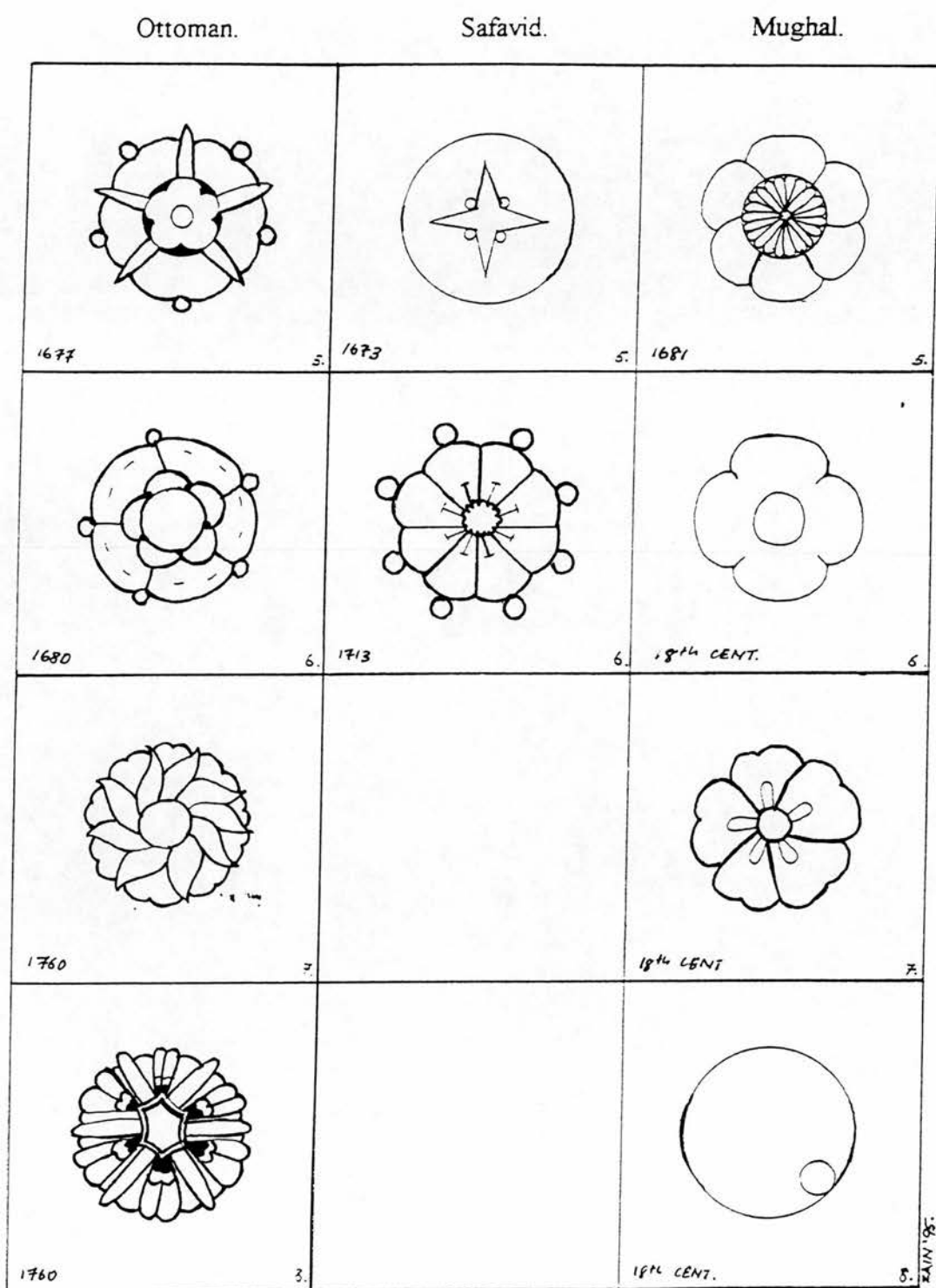


Fig. 7b. Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal *âyah*-marker.

### 3.7. Marginal designs<sup>169</sup>

The marginal designs used in the Ottoman and Mughal styles were also quite close to the style of the Safavid ones. Still, they are no match for the innate elegance of the Safavid style even though they display a more or less equal standard of artistic skill. Towards the end of the 16th century, the Ottoman and Mughal marginal designs began to develop their own character. This was a crucial period in which a definitive style, distinct from the Safavid one, was established.

Safavid marginal designs were refined in execution. Their motifs were intricately drawn, well balanced and harmonious. One can see the perfection of their designs and any additional detail or colour would be counter-productive. Close examination of the 16th-century Safavid marginal designs shows that structurally they are made up of circular, escutcheon and floral designs. There are variants in these basic shapes and the artists' skills were further reflected within these variants. The floral patterns within these marginal designs can range from a very simple design to the most sophisticated one, but they are often not excessive or under-decorated (see Fig. 8a, nos. 1, 2, 3 & 5, Fig. 8b, nos. 6, 7, 8 & 10, and Fig. 8c, no. 11). These characteristics are not found in Ottoman and Mughal marginal designs.

Ottoman marginal designs of the first half of the 16th century were rather bold, heavy and lack the refinement of Safavid work (see Fig. 8a, nos. 1-3 and Fig. 8b, no. 4). Their lines were strong and assertive. In the second half of the 16th century, these marginal designs began to reflect the influence of Safavid designs. They begin to be lighter and less bold in their floral motifs (see Fig. 8b, nos. 5 and 6), and

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<sup>169</sup> See list of figures for detail information of each design.

generally less ornate than Safavid work (see Fig. 8a, nos.1-3). On the other hand, Mughal marginal designs were almost identical with those of the Safavids. Escutcheon shapes were also used, but had less decoration. Simple floral designs or patterns were depicted in Mughal marginal designs. More emphasis were given to the decorated lines extended at the top and bottom of the escutcheon-shaped marginal designs (see Fig 8a, nos. 1-2).

From the 17th century onwards, Safavid marginal designs tend to become much more decorative than in the previous century. Nevertheless, the earlier characteristics of the Safavid style were still maintained (see Fig. 8a, no. 4, Fig. 8b, no. 9 and Fig. 8c, nos. 12-13), as were the boldness and heaviness of the Ottoman designs, though to a lesser degree. There are some designs which to recall the qualities of Safavid work (see Fig. 8c, nos. 7 and 8) but if imitation is the aim, it is not quite successful. As for Mughal work (see Fig. 8b, nos. 3 and Fig. 8c, no. 4), additional decorative elements like little dots or finials were added surrounding the lotus-type marginal design.

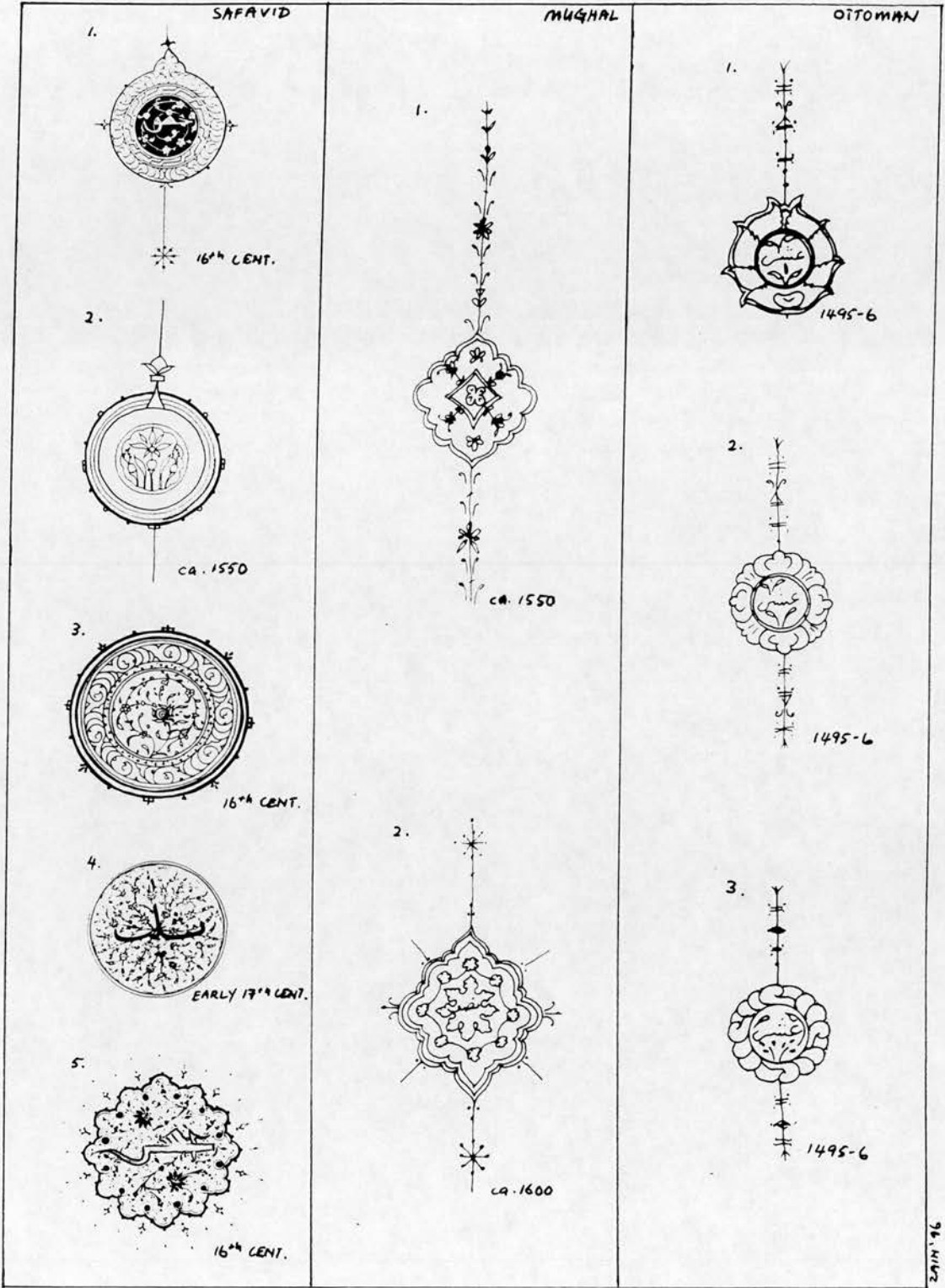


Fig. 8a. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman marginal designs.



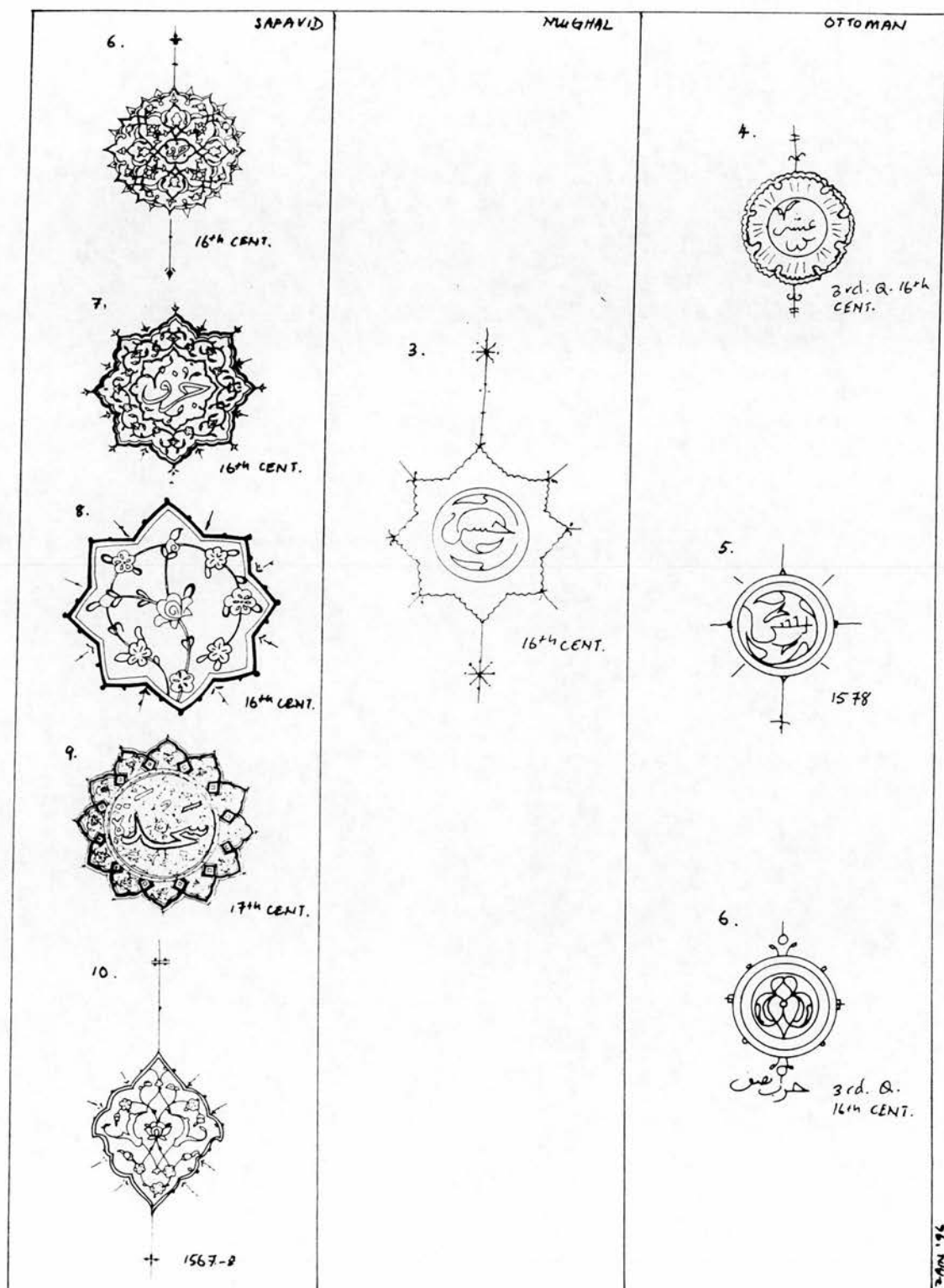


Fig. 8b. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman marginal designs.

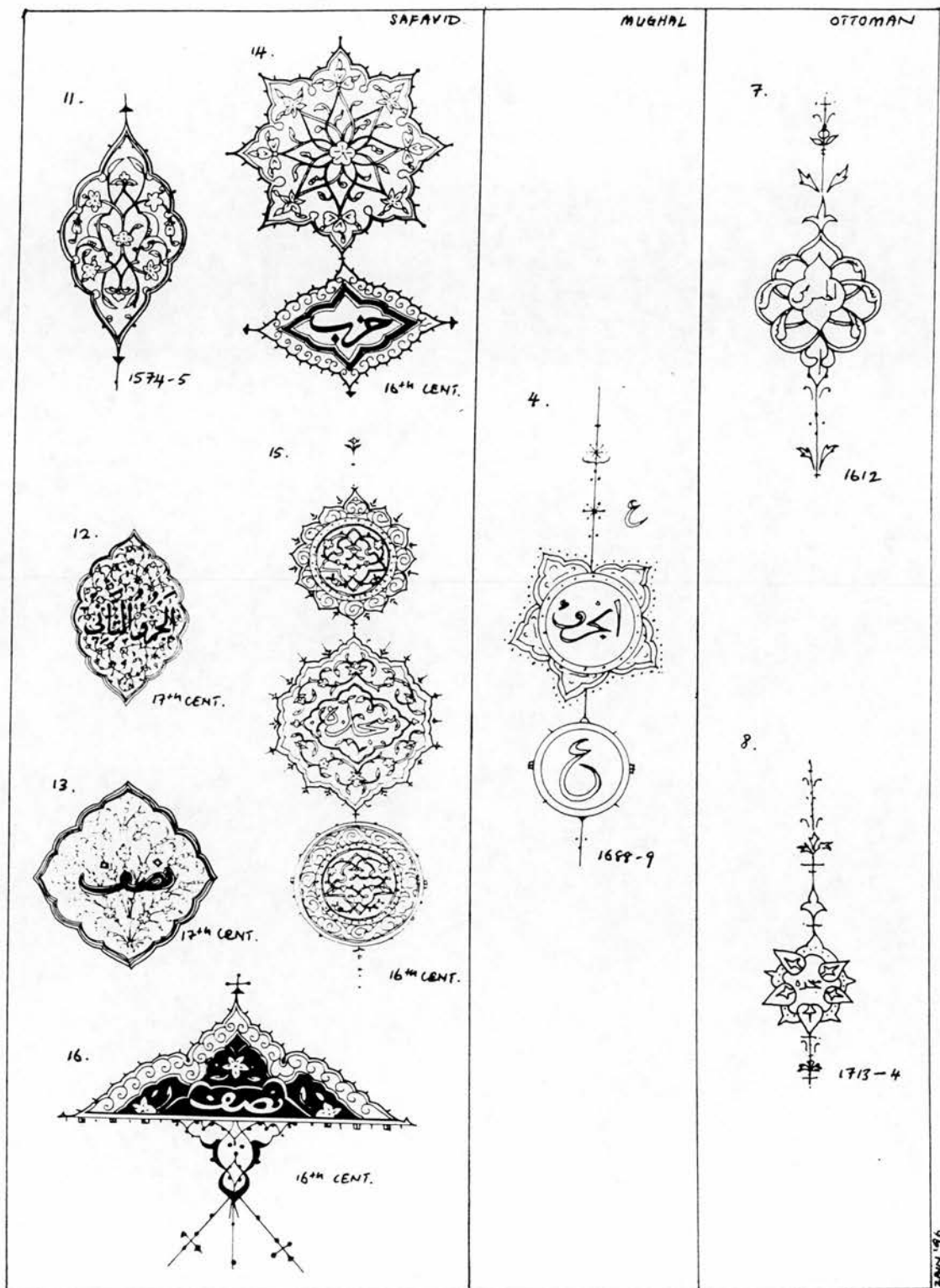


Fig. 8c. Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman marginal designs.

### 3.8. Plant motifs and cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh*

The use of plant motifs above the letter *sîn* in the *bismillâh* is another feature which may help to define the Safavid style, and it can be found especially in the first word (*bismillâh*) of *Sûrahs* 1 and 2. The relatively wide space above the word *bismillâh* provided opportunities for artists to expand their artistic repertoire. Thus the plant motifs in this area were often depicted with extra elements, for example in terms of size, number of plant motifs and intricacy of design. The other plant motifs drawn in between the text or in the cloud-bands were not given the same treatment. This emphasis produced several distinct stylistic accents that contribute to the definition of these three different styles of Qur'ân.

Basically, most of the text in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 was enclosed in cloud-bands. It can be said that these three elements — the cloud-band, the plant motif and the text — were constantly depicted together and were compositionally related. Four types of cloud-band designs within the text block are found in Safavid Qur'âns.

The first type consists of a cloud-band that excludes plant motifs and is reserved for the text (see Fig. 9-Safavid, nos. 1, 3 and 6)<sup>170</sup>. But plant motifs occur above the cloud-band, depicted in close detail in repeat patterns or in groups. It is this latter feature which is diagnostic for category 1. This scheme lasted until the end of the Safavid period.<sup>171</sup> However, this particular style was also quite common in both

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<sup>170</sup> See James, *AT*, pls.30, 45 and Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 105.

<sup>171</sup> See Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 105. This Qur'ân was copied by Mîza Ahmad al-Tabrizî and dated 1136/1723-4.

Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns (see Fig. 9-Mughal,<sup>172</sup> nos. 1 and Fig. 9-Ottoman,<sup>173</sup> nos. 3, 5 and 6).

The second type of design consists of two cloud-bands within the text block. The first cloud-band is of course for the text, while the second cloud-band is for the plant motifs. Both are depicted side by side within the text block (see Fig. 9-Safavid, no. 2).<sup>174</sup> Although the Mughal design is quite close to the Safavid one, the internal plant motif is not as intricately drawn as are the Safavid ones (compare Fig. 9-Mughal, nos. 2 and 3).<sup>175</sup> The Mughal plants are much simpler, and are painted on a hatched ground (see Fig. 9-Mughal, no. 2) as well as a ground consisting of groups of three dots (see Fig. 9-Mughal, no. 3). The Safavid plant seems to have more flower buds and leaves. There are also groups of three dots in the background surrounding the plant motifs within the cloud band (see Fig. 9-Safavid, no. 2).

The third type is the depiction of a plant motif together with the text within the cloud-band itself (see Fig. 9-Safavid, no. 5). The plant motif is so treated as to fill the length of the letter *sîn* of the word *bismillâh*. There are no other plant motifs depicted outside this cloud-band. This stylistic quirk is not found in Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns. An example of this can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Mîrza Aḥmad al-Tabrîzî and dated 1136/1723.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> See British Library, ADD. 18497.

<sup>173</sup> See Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339, Sotheby's, 14 December 1987, lot 240 and Christie's, 28 November 1983, lot 105.

<sup>174</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.31.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.52 and Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>176</sup> See Christie's, 4 July 1985, lot 105.



The fourth type is also a single plant motif (not a group of plants as in category 1) depicted above the cloud band of the *bismillâh*. This single plant motif is not depicted within any cloud band and it seems to be growing out of the cloud band that contain the word *bismillâh*. This particular style can be found in both Safavid and Ottoman Qur'âns. At times they pose problems in identification because of this closeness in style (compare Fig. 9- Safavid,<sup>177</sup> no. 4 and Ottoman,<sup>178</sup> nos. 3, 5 and 6). Nevertheless, one diagnostic clue is in the treatment of their flowers. The Safavid flowers in Fig. 9, no. 4 are depicted as small, simple and less detailed than the Ottoman ones in Fig. 9, nos. 5 and 6. One could say that the flowers in the Ottoman example are much louder than the Safavid ones, as if making sure that their presence is felt. This characteristic is also evident in other examples of the *bismillâh* that have no cloud band. Fig. 9-Ottoman,<sup>179</sup> nos. 1 and 2 shows that only a single plant motif was used. There are two leaves and a few simple flower buds used in this plant motif. On the other hand, sometimes elaborate plant motifs can also be found. The Ottoman style of intricate plant motifs also lacks a cloud-band for the text (see Fig. 9-Ottoman, no. 4).<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> See Christie's, 1 April 1982, lot 161. This Qur'ân was copied by Hafîz ibn ʿAlî and dated 1099/1687.

<sup>178</sup> See a Qur'ân copied by Hassan and dated 996/1587, in Sotheby's 21 November 1985, lot 339; Qur'ân copied by Mustafa Hilmi and dated 1214/1719, in Sotheby's 14 December 1987, lot 240 and in a Qur'ân copied by Sayyid Muhammad al-Shakir and illuminated by al-Hajj Muhammad Nûri' and dated 1208/1793-4, in Christie's 18 November 1983, lot 105.

<sup>179</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.54 and Christie's, 11 April 1989, lot 79.

<sup>180</sup> See Christie's, 1 April 1982, lot 161. This Qur'ân was copied by Hafîz ibn ʿAlî and is dated 1099/1687.

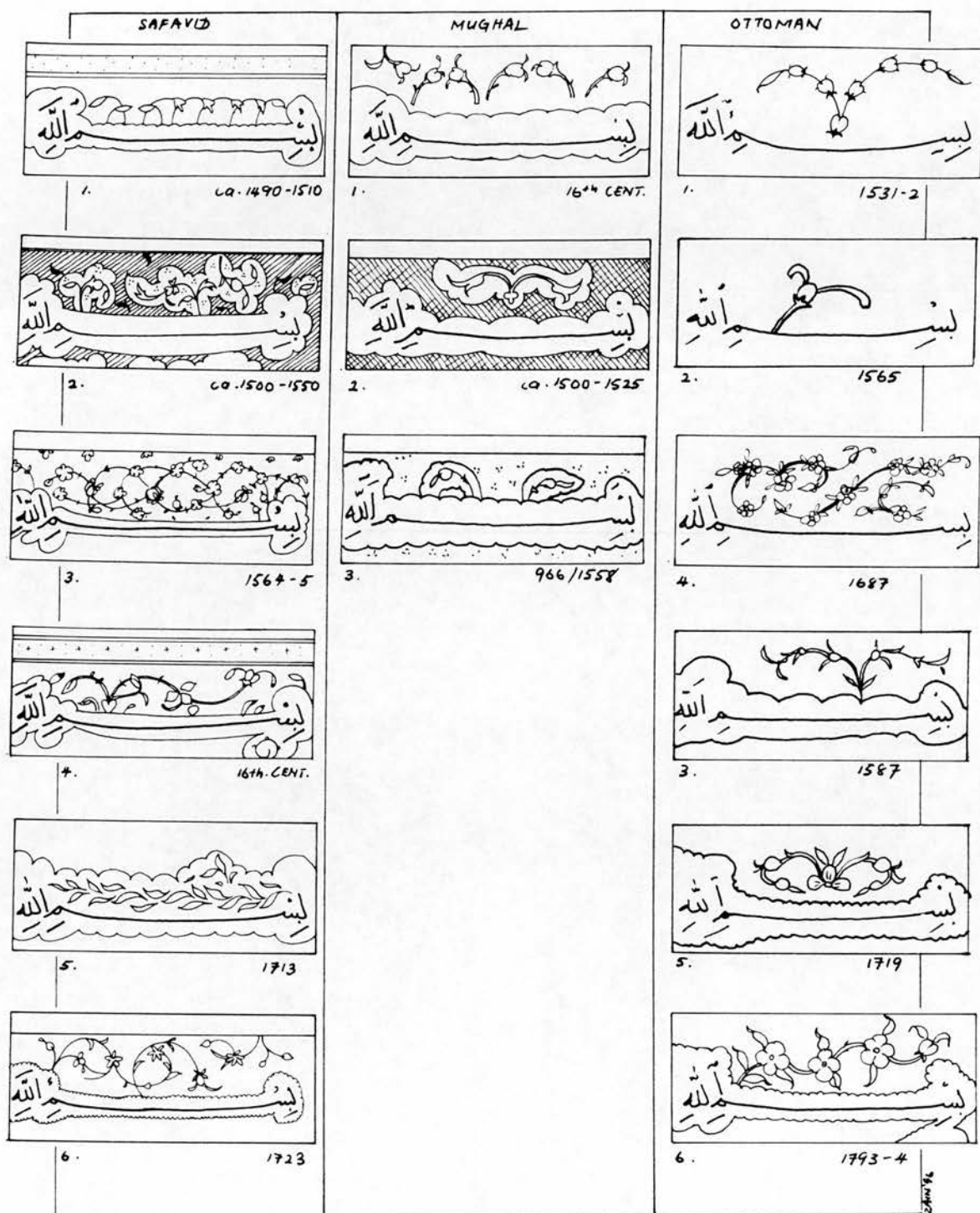


Fig. 9, The plant motifs and cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh*.

#### 4. Preliminary conclusion

The 16th and 17th centuries was a period of active inter-geographical artistic influences and of the mobility of artists between the three empires. The emigration of Safavid artists to the Ottoman and Mughal workshops makes the study of styles of Qur'anic illumination very complex, since there may be numerous styles in any one particular Qur'ân. Only close examination, especially of pages that were fully illuminated, allows one to determine their true provenance. Basically, it is important to have two related approaches in mind in this study of illuminated Qur'âns: the documentary and the stylistic. The former focuses on the availability of written evidence in the Qur'ân itself, such as the artist's name, the colophon and the *waqfiyah*. The latter concentrates on visual or artistic evidence such as colours, motifs and formats.

A signed Qur'ân containing documentary information is of the utmost value as a benchmark for origin and style. But the situation is not as simple as that. On the basis of 20 years' sales as recorded in Christie's and Sotheby's catalogues alone, altogether about 35% of the 16th-17th centuries Qur'âns that were on sale contained signatures. Individually the percentage of signed Qur'âns was 32% Safavid, 43% Ottoman and 30% Mughal. This clearly shows that - if this sample is any guide — less than half of the Qur'âns produced in these three empires were signed. Although these signatures are intrinsically of little help, they do provide some pointers in formulating the style of these Qur'âns, and relating this to a particular time and place.

Stylistically, this study has focused on six different areas of illumination that can provide diagnostic clues towards establishing what are Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns. These six areas of illumination are colours; layout; scripts; *âyah-*

markers; marginal designs and the plant motifs and the cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh*.

### **Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns**

16th and 17th-century Ottoman Qur'âns use, apart from the traditional palette, two colours greenish<sup>181</sup> and dark purplish red.<sup>182</sup> The mixture of these colours affects the heavy block like forms, and the strong outlines, and because the motifs are large and bold, they have a powerful impact when filled with these colours. The treatment of flowers became the trademark of an Ottoman style. Ottoman artists liked to add focus in their design incorporating flowers that have a plastic effect among the abstract flowers.<sup>183</sup> As in the case of the frame format, there are three groups of designs (see Figs. 1a and 1b): the simple plain format (D.1 design),<sup>184</sup> the triangular (D.2 design)<sup>185</sup> and dome-shaped (D.2.4 design)<sup>186</sup> at the head, tail and fore-edge margins, and the crenellated frames (D.3 design).<sup>187</sup> There are also variants of these designs such as D.3.1, D.3.2, D.3.6 and D.3.7 (see Fig. 1a).

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<sup>181</sup> Sotheby's, 22-22 November 1985, lot 340: an Ottoman Qur'ân dated 999/1590.

<sup>182</sup> See pl.10 in this chapter. This Qur'ân was copied by ʿAbdullâh al-Qirîmî and dated 973/1565-6.

<sup>183</sup> See pl.12 in this chapter. This Qur'ân was copied by Muşţafâ al-Hilmî and is dated 1214/1719.

<sup>184</sup> See James *AT*, pl.57. Qur'ân copied by Dervish Mehmed ibn Muşţafâ Dede ibn Hamdullâh and dated 985/1551.

<sup>185</sup> See James *AT*, pl.54.

<sup>186</sup> See Sotheby's, 21 November 1985, lot 339: a Qur'ân copied in 996/1587 by Hassan.

<sup>187</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.55: a Qur'ân copied in 912/1506-7 by Muşţafâ ibn Naşûh al-Selânikî.



Another significant area is the text block, which is conceived in a manner very different from Safavid practice (see Figs. 2a, 2b, and 2c). Basically, two types of text block were used: the typical vertical rectilinear text block (B.1 design)<sup>188</sup> and the circular text block (B.4 design).<sup>189</sup> Surrounding the text block are decorative panels. These flanking panels, when viewed together with the text block itself, formed vertical or horizontal<sup>190</sup> tripartite blocks within the frame format. These flanking panels each consist of one, two, three or more lozenges which serve to accommodate patterns (see Figs. 2a, 2b and 2c). Another design found in Ottoman Qur'âns is the use of only one horizontal decorative panel placed at the top of the text block (Fig. 2c, B.3 design).<sup>191</sup> 16th-century Ottoman *ḥunwâns* display U.1, U.1.1, U.2, U.3, U.4, U.5 and U.5.3 designs (see Fig. 3a). On the other hand, in the 17th century, variants of the U.2 design seems to be dominant (see Fig. 3b). As for the type of script used for the main text, 81% of 16th-century Ottoman Qur'âns (see Tables A, B and C) use a single script technique (*naskh*), 17% two scripts (*naskh* + *thuluth* or *naskh* + *muḥaqqaq*), and a mere 2% three scripts (*naskh* + *muḥaqqaq* + *riqa'*). With the 17th century, the situation changed, 97% of Qur'âns using a single-script technique (*naskh*), and 3% a two-script technique (*muḥaqqaq* + *nastā'liq*). Ottoman Qur'âns use six different designs for *āyah*-markers<sup>192</sup> in *Sûrah* 1 and the placement of these *āyah*-markers corresponds to the hidden line of the text (see Fig. 4). In terms of

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45. A Qur'ân copied in 973/1565 by Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî.

<sup>190</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.60. A Qur'ân copied in 976/1577 by Dâwûd ibn ʿAbdullâh.

<sup>191</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94. A Qur'ân copied in 1099/1687 by Ḥâfîz ibn ʿAlî.

<sup>192</sup> See Christie's, 24 April 1980, lot 96.

design, these *âyah*-markers were depicted with minute plant motifs at the outer ring and one beautiful flower at the centre. Flame-like motifs were also used for the *âyah*-markers (see Figs. 7a and 7b). The marginal designs seem weighty and bold (see Fig. 8, a, b and c). In *Sûrah* 1, above the word *bismillâh*, a single plant motif is often prominently depicted (see Fig. 9).

Similarly, in Mughal Qur'âns, greenish and dark purplish red effects can also be found. The application of colours here is quite close to Safavid practice but is manifested in densely overlapping floral and arabesque designs. Besides such broad impressions, other colour schemes can be seen such as orange, Indian yellow and light blue designs, pink, orange and green.<sup>193</sup> Several techniques were used in Mughal Qur'âns: a double framing technique with fine short lines at the edges of its inner frame (D.1.2 design),<sup>194</sup> a triangular shape at the fore-edge margin overlapping the double frames (D.2.3 design)<sup>195</sup> and a three-dome-shaped design in their margins (D.2.5 design).<sup>196</sup> Another feature is the text block which has an escutcheon shape within the lozenge design in the decorative panels (B.1.2.1. and B.2.1 designs).<sup>197</sup> The Mughal B.2.2 design is not found in Safavid and Ottoman Qur'âns.<sup>198</sup> As in the

<sup>193</sup> See Sotheby's 14 December 1987, lot 234, datable 16th century and in a Qur'ân datable ca. 1590 A.D. in Sotheby's 22-23 October 1992, lot 581.

<sup>194</sup> See a Qur'ân copied by Maqṣûd ʿAlî 1092/1681 in Sotheby's 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

<sup>195</sup> See a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manṣûr al-Ḥusainî in 966/1558, in Sotheby's 13 October 1989, lot 94.

<sup>196</sup> See a Qur'ân copied by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî in 1037/1627, in Sotheby's 22 October 1993, lot 47.

<sup>197</sup> See Fig. 2b and 2c in this chapter.

<sup>198</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 47: a Qur'ân copied in 1037/1627 by Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî.

case of *ʿunwân* design, 16th-century Mughal Qur'âns used the U.5.1 design (see Fig. 3a) while 17th-century examples favoured the U.2.5 design (see Fig. 3b). As for the type of script used in the main text, 80% of 16th-century Mughal Qur'âns used a single script (*naskh*) and 20% two scripts (*naskh* + *thuluth*). In the 17th century, almost all Mughal Qur'âns had *naskh* script for their text (see Tables A, B and C). *Āyah*-markers were simple and were placed higher than in Safavid and Ottoman work (see Figs. 7a, and 7b, and Fig. 4). As for the marginal design and the plant motifs above the word *bismillâh*, they were always depicted in a simple fashion (see Fig. 8, a, b and c, and Fig. 9).

### Safavid Qur'âns

The style of Safavid Qur'âns can also be defined by reference to the six areas of illumination mentioned above. Firstly, the colours and formats of illuminated Qur'âns are compositionally related and together build up the character of the book. The Safavid style has a well-balanced composition and a well spaced-out structure. The Mughal style is the most intricately drawn and painted. Ottoman Qur'âns tend to be more heavy and bold in their overall design. Two sets of colour effects can be found: greenish and dark purplish red. The greenish effect of Safavid Qur'âns produced in the 16th century echoes the Timurid tradition of illumination. Similar effects can also be found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns, but distinctions can be detected in their crenellated borders. Ottoman floral designs are depicted quite far apart, while Mughal designs swarm with minute floral motifs. Furthermore, Mughal artists are fond of Indian yellow, pink, orange and green as well as the traditional blue and gold. There are also realistically depicted flower motifs amidst the abstract floral designs in Ottoman Qur'âns. This style is not found in either Safavid or Mughal illumination. A prominent three-dome-shaped format painted outside the text block

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can only be found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns of the 17th century, not in Safavid Qur'âns.

The frame format of Safavid Qur'âns can be categorised into four types of design (see Figs. 1a and 1b): plain frame format (D.1),<sup>199</sup> triangular or dome-shaped format (D.2),<sup>200</sup> crenellated frame (D.3)<sup>201</sup> and U-shaped frame (D.4).<sup>202</sup> There are variants in each of these designs. The D.4 design is rarely found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns (see Figs. 1a and 1b). Variant D.2.3 can be found also in Mughal Qur'âns at almost the same period as in Safavid Qur'âns, that is the 1550s A.D.<sup>203</sup> Variant D.3.2 can be found in both Ottoman and Safavid Qur'âns in the 1560s A.D.<sup>204</sup> Variants D.3.4, D.3.5 and D.3.9 are rarely found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns (see Fig. 1b). The D.2.4 and D.2.5 (three-dome shaped designs) are common in Ottoman and Mughal but not in Safavid Qur'âns (see Fig.1b). The tentative conclusion to be drawn here is firstly that Mughal Qur'âns fall far short of Safavid and Ottoman ones in the variety of frame formats they employ; and secondly, that while the 16th century saw both Safavid and Ottoman artists pursuing their own independent experiments in this area, Safavid experimentation, unlike that of the Ottoman, continued until the end of the 17th century.

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<sup>199</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.43.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.33.

<sup>201</sup> See Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.

<sup>202</sup> See Sotheby's, 7 April 1975, lot 193.

<sup>203</sup> See Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94 and Khalili, QUR625. See James, *AT*, pl.49.

<sup>204</sup> See Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 45 and Christie's 12 April 1988, lot 69.



Four groups of text block design are found in Safavid Qur'âns. In the 16th century, B.1.2.2, B.4.1, B.4.2, B.4.3 and B.4.4 text block designs are used in Safavid Qur'âns (see Figs. 2a and 2b). What differentiates these from Ottoman and Mughal examples is the text block itself as well as the decorative panels surrounding the text block. Safavid artists experimented with diamond shaped,<sup>205</sup> semi-circular and lozenge forms within the decorative side panels, horizontally<sup>206</sup> or vertically<sup>207</sup> placed escutcheon-shaped text blocks and *ḥumwâns* placed within the text block — all these testify to the ingenuity of the Safavid artist.<sup>208</sup> The 17th-century Safavid text block (see Fig. 2c), suggests the existence of a shared convention between the three schools, for example in B.1.5, B.2.1, B.3 and B.3.1 (See Figs. 2a, 2b and 2c).

16th-century Safavid *ḥumwâns* use variants U.5, U.5.2, U.5.3 and U.2.1. The internal design structure of these *ḥumwâns* is basically a square set on its points and overlapping a lozenge, with or without a triangular shape facing outward at each side (see Fig. 3a).<sup>209</sup> In the 17th century, U.2.3, U.2.4, U.5.7, U.2.6 and U.5.6 designs were used. The earlier structure continued to be used in such details as the small side triangles facing outward, but the centre part had changed to a merely lozenge shape

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<sup>205</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.33.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, pl.39.

<sup>207</sup> See Christie's, 23 April 1981, lot 100.

<sup>208</sup> See Christie's, 20-22 October 1992, lot 244.

<sup>209</sup> See James, *AT*, pl.33, pl.43, pl.32; Sotheby's, 13 October 1989, lot 94; and Sotheby's, 21-22 November 1985, lot 339.

(see Fig. 3b). The U.2.4 design can be found in Ottoman work<sup>210</sup> while the U.2.5 design occurs in Mughal Qur'âns (see Fig. 3b).<sup>211</sup>

Three solutions to the use of scripts were frequently used by calligraphers: the single script (*naskh*), the combination of two scripts (*naskh* and *thuluth*) and the combination of three scripts (*muḥaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth*). Of these three solutions, the *naskh* script used alone is the favourite. About 80% of both Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns use this script. The other two sets of "combination scripts" were less popular. As for Safavid Qur'âns, about 52% use a single-script, 38% two scripts and 10% a combination of three scripts. After 1600 A.D. Safavid Qur'âns show an increase of 8% in Qur'âns executed in a single script and a 2% increase in the combination of two scripts (see Table C, i and ii). The 17th-century Ottoman and the Mughal calligraphers seem to have remained content with the *naskh* script. The use of *muḥaqqaq* for the main text continues in Safavid Qur'âns but not in Ottoman and Mughal ones. The combination of *muḥaqqaq* and *thuluth* scripts for the main text remains popular in Safavid Qur'âns (see Table B, i and ii).

The *âyah*-marker is another clue which helps to determine the style and provenance of a Qur'ân. The Safavid *âyah*-marker was normally placed slightly above the notional base line and maintained the same pattern throughout the Qur'ân. Occasionally, a Safavid Qur'ân may have two different *âyah*-marker designs. These designs are to be found in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2, while the remaining *âyah*-markers in the text will be of one pattern throughout. The Mughal *âyah*-markers often differ in their placement from this arrangement. Mughal *âyah*-markers were placed even higher than the Safavid ones. The Ottoman style often used different sizes

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<sup>210</sup> See Sotheby's, 20 November 1986, lot 326.

<sup>211</sup> See Sotheby's, 15-16 April 1985, lot 224.

and patterns for *âyah*-markers. As many as six different patterns can be found in the opening double page of Ottoman Qur'âns. They are placed roughly at the centre of the notional base line of the text. There are also certain *âyah*-marker designs found in the Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns alike. These designs are simple and easily copied (see Figs. 2 and 3). The illustrations in Fig. 4a and Fig. 4b show that these three empires did, however, develop different styles of decoration for some of their *âyah*-markers. Little delicate lines resembling plant shoots were drawn at the outer ring or circles of *âyah*-markers in the Ottoman period. Small circles placed at different intervals occur on the outer ring of Safavid *âyah*-markers, whereas there are almost none in Mughal Qur'âns. Some bold and exotic designs can be seen in Ottoman Qur'âns, such as the flame-like motif, in contrast to the rather tame geometric, organic or plant designs in Safavid Qur'âns. In Mughal Qur'âns, the designs of flower motifs were rather modest and not as stimulating as those in used in Safavid Qur'âns.

The overall characteristics of the Safavid style of illumination are also reflected in the marginal designs. These marginal motifs were based on circular, escutcheon and flower-shaped designs. Their internal floral elements were rarely excessive or under-decorated. The Ottoman style maintained its boldness and heaviness but the Mughal style was comparatively simple in this aspect of illumination. Extra emphasis was given to the decorated lines that extended from the top and bottom of Mughal marginal designs.

Last but not least, the Safavid style can also be detected in the plant motifs and cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh* in the opening double-page spread. There are four types of cloud-band designs. The first design consists of a cloud-band with groups of plant motif outside it. This design lasted until the end of the Safavid period, whereas in the Ottoman and Mughal domains it was popular only in the first

half of the 16th century. The second type consists of two cloud-bands within the text, one for the text and the other for the plant motifs. This design is not found in Ottoman Qur'âns. As for the Mughal version of this device, it is quite similar to the Safavid one but not as finely designed. The third design is when the plant motif and the text are both enclosed in cloud-bands. The plant-motifs fill the entire length of the letter *sîn* in the word *bismillâh*, and there is no plant motif outside this cloud-band. This design is not found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns. Lastly, there is the single plant motif depicted above the *bismillâh*, with or without cloud-band. This design formula exists only in Safavid and Ottoman Qur'âns. The Safavid style portrayed a somewhat slenderer design, with more leaves and flowers, than the Ottoman style, which is much simpler, with one or two leaves and a few flower buds. The Ottoman flowers, moreover, are depicted on a large scale, sometimes with cloud-bands and sometimes without. Thus the Safavid style, though its individuality can be sensed at a glance, can also be dissected into a sequence of individual and characteristic parts, and many of these can be shown to differ from their Ottoman and Mughal counterparts. It is in the accumulation of such individual and small details that the evidence for dating and provenance lies hidden.



## Conclusion

The art of Qur'ânic illumination is a topic that has long been in need of detailed study. Since the array of Islamic art exhibitions held in London in 1976, and the publication of Martin Lings' book entitled *The Qur'ânic Art of Illumination and Calligraphy*, the major studies have been those of James *Qur'âns of the Mamlûks* in 1988 and the Déroche and James books on Qur'âns in the Khalili collection (1992). Safavid Qur'âns have in general been neglected, since more attention has been paid to Qur'âns made before the 16th century. Systematically presented visual data were far too scanty to support the research for this thesis; indeed, to the writer's knowledge, it can be said that there has been almost none. It is entirely understandable that most interest has focused on documented manuscripts, and hence on such details as the names of scribes and illuminators, date and provenance. On occasions it may be possible to relate a well-documented Qur'ân to other literary evidence. No doubt, there have been successful attributions of given Qur'âns to various schools, but the methods used for such identification remain obscure. One is given impressionistic discussion but nothing more tangible.

No account of a research project is complete without some discussion of avenues of exploration that proved to be abortive. There is some value in discussing these, since future researchers in this field might learn from them. In the early stages of the research for this thesis, efforts were made to establish the cultural and philosophical underpinning of the time and to explore how this might have influenced the production of illuminated Qur'âns. In particular, the relevance of sufism and of the philosophy of Islamic art in general was assessed with great care. Unfortunately, it eventually became clear that there was not enough tangible evidence to relate philosophy and Qur'ânic illumination in an unmistakable way. Such indications as

were found were too insubstantial and subjective to make the connection. There are indeed treatises that deal with the art of writing and even shed light on some workshop procedures. But even prolonged research served only to highlight the difficulties of claiming that the different layers in the framing of the text block, the different colours used, the geometric structural layout, and the symbols of *âyah*-markers and marginal designs had some philosophical aspect or *raison d'être*, or for that matter could be related to the different stages of *îmân* in Sufism. Philosophy deals with the personality itself and its state of communion with God, the different levels for achieving *îmân*, and self-purification. It is important for every Muslim to arrive at the desired state of *îmân*, and that *îmân* should in principle be expressed in every action of the Muslim's life. So if an artist is involved in copying and illuminating the Qur'ân, that person's degree of *îmân* should theoretically be expressed in the finished work. Yet the fact remains that there is no objective way of measuring this.

Attempts were also made to make a connection between the few *âyât* that are illuminated and their meaning. The writer tried to relate al-Ghazâlî's concept of the "jewels and pearls" *âyât* in the Qur'ân to those distribution of illuminated *âyât* in Safavid Qur'âns. There are occasionally hints of some meaningful connection of this kind but they are not consistent and eventually it turned out that these illuminated *âyât* served to mark the beginning of sections (*juz'*) in the Qur'ân. This, then, is the most convincing explanation — that such illuminated *âyât* functioned as markers of a new section.

A third and still more important aspect that is beyond the scope of this thesis is the science of the Qur'ân itself. This is a highly specialised area that need years of experience and deep erudition. No doubt it is important to know in greater depth of the many different aspects of the text itself, for example the structure of the Qur'ân

and knowledge of *tajwīd*. Perhaps the seven different ways of reciting the text might be related in some way to the different types of decorative reading devices used in Safavid Qur'āns. If it were possible to detect these variations in recitation through reading devices, it might also be possible to detect the provenance of such a Qur'ān, for different regions in the Islamic world have different ways of recitation as well as different styles of writing and of presentation. For example, in a Malaysian context it is traditional in *Sûrah* 18:19 to mark in red the words *wa-l-yatalaṭṭaf* ("And let him behave with care and courtesy"). These words are known in Malaysia today as "the heart of the Qur'ān". Though the word "heart" may suggest some philosophical interpretation, it could also simply mean the physical centre of the Qur'ān and that it is marked in red for that reason. But, as far as this writer is aware, this device is not found in Safavid Qur'āns or for that matter in any other non-Malaysian Qur'ān. The centre of Safavid Qur'āns was often marked at the beginning of *Sûrah* 18 (*al-Kahfi*). In these Safavid Qur'āns, the whole page beginning with the first verse of *Sûrah* 18 is illuminated, but the illumination stops just before *āyah* 19. These differences in practice are a subject for future research, as are the ways in which illuminated Qur'āns reflect the seven different ways of reciting the text. It seems clear that each artist follows a specific tradition but these traditions as yet to be found. To reconstitute them on the basis of Qur'āns already centuries old is a daunting task and a major challenge not just for art historians but for specialists in the Qur'ānic sciences.

Several aspects of this research were not possible to examine because of certain practical constraints as distinct from the intellectual constraints described in the previous three paragraphs. Limited financial support and the limited time allocated for this study have been the main problems. Thus, this research concentrates only on materials available within the British Isles. Primary materials outside the British Isles were thus beyond the remit of this thesis. There may of course be material that

escaped the writer's attention. Fortunately, the primary material presented here were enough to give the writer invaluable first-hand experience in handling priceless Qur'ân manuscripts. Initial plans to speed up the research process were made by using special computing programmes (Computer Aided Design-CAD). After many attempts, this proved to create another set of problems that threatened to consume even more time as well as money. At this stage, time was not on the writer's side and after consulting with a few experts in computing, the plan had to be aborted. Since then, analysis has perforce proceeded by making drawings manually of selected samples in this research. Long man hours were spent in detail observation, executing painstaking line drawings, and using specialist equipment. Slides were also made, several processes were involved in transforming these coloured slides into prints and later into line drawings. Many on-site drawings were made in the course of this study. These processes must be conducted slowly and systematically if they are to help unveil the hidden working method in the selected designs of any one particular style. Thereafter, systematic arrangement and categorisation of designs has to be based on both dated and undated samples. Long hours of visual training, looking at slides and pictures from books, as well as expensive trips to major collections were undertaken to confirm and reconfirm the findings. It soon emerged that it was dangerous to make any quick decision based on a single visit to look at the manuscripts, for these periods (16th and 17th centuries) are full of overlaps. For example, the original intention was to stay in Dublin for a month but this period ended up as almost two months, during which it was necessary to work every single day within the constraints of office working hours. Fortunately, the working environment plus the supportive, mature researchers and resourceful staff of the Chester Beatty Library, especially the Director himself, made my stay there the most rewarding working experience that I have ever had. I was given the liberty to photograph any part of the Qur'âns which were relevant to my research. Thus, many close-ups were executed according to the needs of this research. This was



supplemented by making many detail studies of published illuminated Qur'âns, especially in Sotheby's and Christie's Sales and Auction Catalogues, in order to get to know the unwritten traditions of Qur'ân production. The need to learn about paper or materials used in illuminated Qur'âns, or other scientific methods of examination such as infra-red tests, has had to be put on hold because of time and financial constraints.

It would be pretentious to claim that this thesis has provided all the answers or filled the gaps. Still, one can learn enough from this research, notably from the findings based on detailed drawings and highlighted areas in selected illuminated Qur'âns, to enable one to identify the various Safavid sub-styles as well as paving the way at defining Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns. The data presented in this thesis, especially the drawings, which are by no means exhaustive, can be used as visual guides for the identification of Safavid style as well as Safavid art in general. These visual vocabularies also act as a reference point in looking at what has happened before and after the Safavid period. It ought to be possible to diagnose, stylistically, the provenance of a particular Qur'ân on the basis of this research.

Incidentally, the experience garnered in this study has shed some light on my own earlier research on illuminated Qur'âns in South-east Asia. Examples of Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, Indian and Chinese Qur'âns can be found in this part of the world and especially in the new collection of Qur'ân manuscripts in the Museum of Islamic Art in Malaysia. Most of the Qur'âns shown in the Festival of Islamic Art and Civilisation Exhibition (1991-2) at the Istiqlâl Mosque in Jakarta are, however, definitely local and unique.

For the many undocumented Qur'âns loosely classed as Ottoman, Safavid or Mughal, this stylistic analysis can be of use in establishing provenance. Some main

areas that together form the basic characteristics of a typically Safavid style of illumination have been established in this research. For example, the reason for having a *shamsah*, with or without verses, is simply to carry a symbolic meaning about the word of God and its 'Light' by means of His text. The beginning, the centre and the last section of the text were illuminated simply to serve as a visual indicator to the reciter. Similarly with the illuminated *âyah*-markers that mark every single *âyah*, the marginal designs that mark every five and ten *âyât*, and the *juz'*, *hizb*, *thulth* and *nisf* marks for sections in the Qur'ân as well as the *sajdah* marks for prostration to be made. The placement of these marks, of the *âyah*-markers within the text and also of other divisions of *âyah*-marks (*khamsah* and *asharah*) will be in the margin. These are long established traditions that were followed but were stylistically manipulated without any shift in visual meaning. Furthermore, artistic parallels can be found in other forms of art in the Safavid period as well as elsewhere in the Islamic world. For example, certain plant and cloud motifs can be found in carpet designs, architecture, secular manuscripts, metalwork, ceramics and coins in the Islamic empires. An awareness of this wider background involving other media is a necessary prerequisite for any stylistic analysis of Qur'ânic illumination. Once this knowledge of basic artistic forms has been established, the task of defining their particular manifestation in a Qur'ân will be that much easier.

The Qur'ânic art of illumination has a tradition but unfortunately it is an unwritten tradition. This tradition is already well developed in 8th-10th century Qur'âns. Illumination appears in frontispieces and finispieces, *âyah*-markers, title-headings and the marking of a new *sûrah*. In these four major areas, variants of design can be found over the centuries. For example variants of division marks were used to indicate every five or ten *âyât* in a *sûrah*. From the second half of the 8th century, red dots were added to denote vocalisation marks. From the 10th century A.D. onwards,

all these marks were replaced by a new set of *âyah*-markers and diacritical marks. These elements were continuously perfected to facilitate reading and they also help indirectly to identify the provenance of a given Qur'ân. The script used for Qur'âns also changed over time according to the region and its cultural background. Examples of these scripts are *naskh*, *maghribî*, *nastâ'liq* and *şînî* script, to name just a few. The format of the Qur'ân, too, changes from an oblong shape (before the 10th century A.D.) to a vertical rectangular shape Qur'ân (from 10th century A.D. to the present day).

There are two types of Qur'âns, hand-held ones and the *rahl* type of Qur'ân. The former has equal measurements for the head, fore-edge and tail margins (giving a margin proportion of 2:2:2:2). The text is always placed at the centre of the page. The latter has the margin proportion of 2:6:6:3 and the text is placed slightly towards the tail margin. Muslims recite their Qur'âns by placing them face up on a *rahl*. The layout margins are calculated to bring the text nearer to the reader. The text has to begin from the right-hand side of an open double-page spread. Unfortunately this early tradition of bookmaking was not documented in the form of a treatise. Indeed, no-one has yet discovered a medieval written document that exclusively deals with the Qur'ânic art of illumination. The nearest theoretical information pertaining to this form of art deals with calligraphy, the most prestigious art form in Islam and frequently regarded as a prime mover in Islamic art. This is because of its direct link with the text of the Qur'ân. Scores of master calligraphers such as Ibn Muqlâh, Ibn al-Bawwâb and Yâqût al-Musta<sup>c</sup>simî developed over the centuries theoretical as well as practical canons for this art. But these were spread by oral tradition and remained, it seems, a workshop secret. The presence of royal libraries and ateliers, *warrâq* workshops and guild systems all contributed to the diversity of the art of illumination, but the details of these contributions remain to be discovered.

In the treatises of Qâḍî Aḥmad (16th century A.D.) and Bâbâ Shâh (17th century A.D.), twelve basic principles in the art of calligraphy are listed. All these principles were, it seems, based on the traditions formulated by their predecessors, master calligraphers of earlier centuries. In Bâbâ Shâh Isfâhânî's rules of calligraphy in his *Âdâb al-mashq*, the first nine have to do with style and the last three go beyond style. These principles are as follows: composition (*tarkîb*), equal height of similar letters (*kursî*), proportion (*nisbat*), weakness (*za'f*) in round strokes, strength (*quwwat*) in long strokes, width (*sath*), length (*dûr*), apparent rise (*su'ûd-i majâzî*), apparent fall (*muzûl-i majâzî*), "principles" (*uṣûl*), purity (*safâ'*) and authority (*sha'n*). These principles can also be expanded to encompass the art of illumination as well as any form of Islamic art. Qâḍî Aḥmad and Bâbâ Shâh also stressed the importance of tradition in art. Artists must know their tradition and be truthful to themselves in order to produce a fine work of art.

Safavid Qur'âns consist of four different sizes: size 'A' Qur'âns (between 85 x 53 mm and 187 x 132 mm), size 'B' Qur'âns (between 200 x 130 mm and 299 x 200 mm), size 'C' Qur'âns (between 300 x 180 and 395 x 280 mm) and size 'D' Qur'âns (between 420 x 130 mm and 810 x 610 mm). Size 'C' is the most popular, followed by size 'B'. These Qur'âns can be considered as standard-size Qur'âns. Few Qur'âns are size 'A' and size 'D'. The frame format of Safavid Qur'âns include a triangular shape at the fore-edge margin of their frame format design (mid-16th century), while the 'suggestive' triangular-shaped format (which survived until the mid-16th century), was transformed into a new zig-zag frame format design that lasted for about 150 years. There are two types of text block design: organic-shaped text block and the vertical rectangular text block. The former lasted until the end of the 16th century, while the latter survived until the end of the 17th century. The vertical rectangular format then became much slimmer. 16th-century Safavid Qur'âns have three types of format for



the spine ruling i.e. the vertical line which runs from top to bottom of the page and forms the inner margin to the text block. The single short spine ruling is favoured in the first half of the 16th century. The double spine ruling within an enclosed frame format that begins in the second half of the 16th century. The long spine ruling that touches both the top and bottom edges of the page lasted until the end of the Safavid period. The thickness of the Safavid spine ruling is about 10mm which is much thicker than, indeed twice the size of, its predecessors. The 'U-shaped' frame format in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 survived until the end of the 17th century. The 'U-shaped' format in an enclosed frame can be found in Safavid Qur'âns of the first half of the 16th century. Safavid artists also reduced the 15th-century multiple text blocks to a single text block in their Qur'âns. Sometimes, both *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 are placed on a single folio.

In the line drawings of the *âyah*-markers, some identifiable differences in design and style can be seen in the course of the Safavid period. They have a certain classic maturity, with not too many details; they are relatively simple, non-exotic and yet not too simplified. They reflect a well-controlled design, injecting the right amount of decoration into the restricted space between the *âyât*. Seven different types of marginal designs *manzil*, *juz'*, *hizb*, *rukû'*, *khamsah*, *asharah* and *sajdah* marks — are found in a typical Qur'ân. Before the 10th century A.D., these marks or symbols can be found within the text, but from the 10th century onwards, they were placed in the margin. The simple written word or single-letter designs were replaced by elaborate decorative marginal marks. For example, the word *juz'* is now within a full decorated medallion in the margin. Safavid marginal designs have a high degree of refinement and a relaxed atmosphere as compared to the bold designs of the pre-Safavid period. Some striking visual vocabularies found in these marginal designs are the cloud-scroll motif, the plant-scroll motif and the overall fine-line drawing

technique. However, from the mid-17th century onwards, marginal designs began to deteriorate. They had arrived at saturation point. The cloud-scroll motif gradually disappeared and old models started to make a comeback. The refinement in design, the elegance and the grace of the 16th century gradually disappeared.

Not all Safavid Qur'âns that have survived have a frontispiece. Some frontispieces are provided with Qur'ânic verses and some with none. There is no strict rule controlling which *âyah* is inscribed, but it became a tradition that only certain *âyât* were used for the frontispiece. Verses from *Sûrah al-Wâqî'ah* (56:77-80) and *Sûrah al-Isrâ'* (17:88) are the two selections most preferred by Safavid artists until the end of the 16th century. *Sûrah* 17:88 was inscribed more frequently in the opening folios of Safavid Qur'âns than *Sûrah* 56:77-80. This preference for *Sûrah* 17:88 is a relatively new trend because this happened much less frequently before the Safavid period. Before Safavid times, however, there are many *âyât* from different *sûrahs* inscribed in the frontispieces of which the most popular was from *Sûrah* 56:77-80. This popularity continued; indeed, in Safavid Qur'âns, *Sûrah* 56:77-80 was given a permanent place on the covers of the Qur'ân. The placement of these two *âyât* in frontispieces was most appropriate. *Sûrah* 56:77-80 is concerned with cleanliness while *Sûrah* 17:88 is concerned with the authenticity of the Qur'ân. These two groups of *âyât* are famous among Muslims and they fit well into the layout of the physical form of the Book.

Uninscribed frontispieces can be seen as a kind of symbolic page in the Qur'ân. Abstract forms were used to carry specific meaning in this 'artist's page'. The symbols of lamp, garden and mosque, used in the frontispiece of the 8th-century A.D. Qur'ân found in the Yemen, were transformed into the highest level of abstraction in Safavid Qur'âns. The lamp is a symbol for light, the garden is a symbol for paradise

and the mosque is a symbol for the 'house of God'. All these elements were fused to form one abstract *shamsah* design. The *shamsah*, which symbolises light, was placed at the centre in both inscribed and uninscribed frontispieces. It has a religious and ritual significance, symbolising the universe, and thus, as a whole, carries strong symbolic meanings about the Qur'ân. Muslims believe that the Qur'ân is the Word of God Himself and see it symbolically as the light of God (*Sûrah* 24, *al-Nûr*).

*Shamsah* designs are of two types: the carpet-page *shamsah* and the inscribed *shamsah*. The former uses a tripartite concept in the design. The top and bottom *ḥunwâns*, as well as the *shamsah* at the centre, contained *âyat* from two different *sûrahs* in the Qur'ân. Other aspects of design such as colours, motifs and basic structures, are similar to those of the above-stated *shamsah* designs. The latter can further be sub-divided into two: the multi-layered flower *shamsah* and the circular shaped *shamsah*. The internal design area for the *âyah* is made up of a circular or a floral design. The floral *shamsah* consists of a hidden structure of overlapping squares. Gold was predominantly used for the background of the inscribed area. Other major colours used in this design are blue and gold with little spots of red, light blue, green, pastel colours and white. Some recognisably foreign motifs such as Chinese cloud motifs and lotus flowers, can be found in Safavid design. The scripts were always written in a combination of the Arab and the Persian way of writing, especially in the treatment of the letter *sîn*.

The most popular scripts used during the Safavid period are *naskh* and *thuluth*. *Thuluth* is specially used for *sûrah* headings in Safavid Qur'âns. *Nastâ'liq* script is one of the most beautiful scripts used for Safavid Qur'âns, as shown in a Qur'ân copied for Shâh Tahmâsp by Shâh Maḥmûd al-Nîshâpûrî in 945-6/1538-39, probably from Tabrîz. This Qur'ân can be found in the Topkapi Saray Library. The

*naskh* script, which can be executed faster, became the standard type of script used in the production of the Qur'ân. One fine example of *naskh* script Qur'ân was copied by Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>ḥ</sup>î al-Shîrâzî and dated 952/1545-6, and is now in the Khalili collection. At the turn of the 17th century, *muḥaqqaq* script became less popular and only 5% of the Safavid Qur'âns are found in this script. The tradition of combination scripts for the text continued to be used in the Safavid Qur'âns, but this tradition was innovatively executed in slightly different techniques. Four types of two-script techniques were used by scribes: *naskh* and *thuluth*; *muḥaqqaq* and *naskh*; *thuluth* and *tawqî<sup>ḥ</sup>*; and *rayḥân* and *naskh*. The combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts was the favourite. An example of this can be seen in the 16th-century Chester Beatty Library Qur'ân, CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry no. 162). A combination of three scripts, *muḥaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*, is also used at times for the text of Safavid Qur'âns. This technique is rare and only two examples of three-script combination were found in the 16th-century Safavid Qur'âns. A typical three-scripts combination can be seen in a Qur'ân copied by Habiballâh al-Kâtib al-Marâghî, datable ca. 1560-1570, probably from Herât or Marâghâh, in the Khalili collection.

A new emphasis on pattern in the arrangement of letters within the text block can be recognised. For example, the stretching of all the *mîns* within the text block actually transforms them into pattern. This highlighted letter can be seen to obey hidden structural lines within the text block. These can be in a combination of zig-zag, diagonal; vertical; and horizontal lines. Although this tradition had already existed before the Safavid period, it was now used with greater sophistication. Safavid artists used several letters to create patterns in their Qur'âns, plus other supportive devices such as the *âyah*-markers. Their designs reflect the intelligent use of pictorial devices to balance and counter-balance the patterns within the text block.



Coloured scripts were also used as patterns and they relate to the layout format of the text block. The top panel consists of black scripts while the middle panel is of gold scripts. Another approach is that where the top and bottom panels are in gold scripts, the middle panel in blue scripts and in the areas between all these panels there are smaller black scripts. The typical arrangement of these scripts are: *muḥaqqaq* (top panel), *naskh* (in between panels), *muḥaqqaq* (middle panel), *naskh* (in between panel) and *muḥaqqaq* (bottom panel). An example of this can be seen in a 16th-century Qur'ân in the Chester Beatty Library, CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry no. 158). Decorative elements surrounding the scripts can also be found. There are five different designs: a) the cloud design, b) the floral design; c) the three-dot design; d) the lines design, and e) the filigree design. The rectangular text block format uses designs 'a' to 'd', whereas the organic or escutcheon text block format uses design 'e' only. Safavid artists also improved these designs by introducing much finer work in their floral motifs, the cloud with a floral motif in it and the filigree motif. The floral motifs drawn within the cloud designs were painted in blue as well as in gold. There are two types of cloud design within the text block of Safavid Qur'âns, one for the text and the other for the floral motifs. Safavid Qur'âns with filigree designs normally have no cloud design for the text. Besides these decorative elements, Safavid artists also introduced different colours for the background panels of scripts. This technique intensified the decorative aspects of the illuminated pages in Safavid Qur'âns.

The embellishment of the Qur'ân is a form of dialogue between an individual and God. This dialogue can also be between the individual artist and the reader, with the artist trying to stimulate the reader to appreciate beauty, one of the attributes of God Himself — even though the beauty created by the artist is only on a human plane. This individual artist, who knows his tradition and Islamic culture, has to be someone who understands and appreciates the content of the Qur'ân. He knows that his work

is a direct and tangible piece of evidence that Beauty exists, that God exists. Besides earning a living, his role is that of a facilitator of learning; and through his creativity, he is able indirectly to instil a sense of piety, humility and awareness of the Qur'ân in his reader. This is done by exploiting the rules of copying the Qur'ân and producing the volume to the highest aesthetic standards. This in turn means illuminating certain areas in the Qur'ân, such as *sûrah* headings, *âyah*-markers, marginal marks, certain *âyah* or words and some specific *sûrahs*. All these devices are meant to guide the reader and to illustrate certain important meanings for him. Though this does not cover the total meaning, it is still enough to instil awareness and curiosity into the mind of an inquisitive person. It may be assumed that he desires to be in a state of communion with the word of God. The very fact that the artist is involved in the copying of the Qur'ân brings him nearer to God. Thus, the very least that a man could do is to remember Him always by means of *dhikr*. This is expressed visually by illuminating the word "Allâh" in the Qur'ân.

Safavid Qur'âns differ from Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns in six areas: colours, layout, scripts, *âyah*-markers, marginal designs and finally the plant motifs and the cloud-bands surrounding the word *bismillâh*. All these areas are not necessarily present in a single Qur'ân. Thus, one cannot say outright that a particular Qur'ân is Ottoman, Mughal or Safavid until every single one of these six points has been studied carefully. This method is crucial especially to those Qur'âns which have no documentation. The greenish effect found in Timurid Qur'âns can be found in Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns too in the 16th century. But a distinction can be made in their crenellated borders. The Ottoman floral designs are bold, heavy and well spaced out, while Mughal designs are full of minute details. Besides the traditional colours of blue and gold, Mughal artists like to use green, orange, Indian yellow and pink for their floral designs. On the other hand, Ottoman artists are fond

of depicting realistic flower motifs amidst the abstract floral designs in their Qur'âns. This, adds an extra focal point to their composition. This method is not known in Safavid and Mughal illumination. A prominent three-dome-shaped format is often found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns of the 17th century (see Fig. 1b). The U-shaped frame design is rarely found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns (see Fig. 1a and 1b). As for the text block, 16th-century Safavid work (see Fig. 2a and 2b) differs from that of the Ottomans and Mughals by their use of hidden structural designs within the decorative panels surrounding the text block. Diamond shapes, semi-circular shapes and lozenges were used in these decorative side panels. The horizontal and vertical escutcheon-shaped text blocks, and the placing of the *ʿunwân* within the text block, are characteristic of Safavid designs. Safavid *ʿunwâns* basically use a square overlapping a lozenge with or without a triangular shape facing outward in each side (see Fig. 3a). In the 17th century, there is a return to earlier designs, such as the small side triangles facing outward with a lozenge shape at the centre (see Fig. 3b). The basic layout for colours, text block, *ʿunwâns* and so on follows the same general pattern in Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns of the 17th century (see Fig. 2c). But the differences are palpable. The Safavid style has a well-balanced composition and a well spaced-out structure. The Mughal style is in general — though there are exceptions, especially in *âyah* markers and in marginal designs — the most intricately drawn and painted. Ottoman Qur'âns tend to be more heavy and bold in their overall design.

The choice of scripts for the text can also provide clues to differentiate these three schools of Qur'ân production. Three sets of scripts were frequently used: the single script (*naskh*), the combination of two scripts (*naskh* and *thuluth*) and the combination of three scripts (*muḥaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth*). About 80% of both Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns were written in *naskh* as against about 52% Safavid

Qur'âns. The combination of scripts was less favoured in Mughal and Ottoman Qur'âns but 38% of Safavid Qur'âns are in the *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts, and 10% in the combination of *muḥaqqaq*, *naskh* and *thuluth* scripts. In 17th-century Safavid Qur'âns, *naskh* script increases by 8% and the combination of *naskh* and *thuluth* by 2%, so there is little change on either front. The Ottoman and the Mughal scribes seem to have settled on the *naskh* script only. The use of single *muḥaqqaq* script and the combination of *muḥaqqaq* and *thuluth* scripts for the main text remained popular in Safavid Qur'âns but not in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns.

There are also decorative elements surrounding the word *bismillâh* in *Sûrah* 1 and 2 that could help to define these three schools. The Safavid type has a cloud-band with plant motifs outside it, and this lasted until the end of the Safavid era. But this design was only popular in the first half of the 16th century in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns. Next, the design that comprises the word *bismillâh* within the cloud band, with the plant motifs relegated to another cloud band. Such a design is not found in Ottoman Qur'âns. Mughal Qur'âns use this design but lack refinement. Plant motifs and the word *bismillâh*, both depicted within cloud-bands, are rarely found in Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns. Single-plant motifs depicted above the cloud-band that contains the *bismillâh* exist only in Safavid and Ottoman Qur'âns but no example has been found in Mughal Qur'âns to date. The Safavid design comprises more leaves and flowers which are in turn more finely painted, than in Ottoman work. The Ottoman has much simpler design, big and without cloud-bands in this area, with one or two leaves only and a few flower buds.

Safavid *âyah*-markers were placed slightly above the notional base line and maintained the same pattern throughout the Qur'ân. Occasionally, there can be two different designs of *âyah*-markers, but these are only found in *Sûrah* 1 and the



beginning of *Sûrah* 2, while the rest of the *âyah*-markers remain true to one pattern throughout the Qur'ân. The Mughal *âyah*-markers are placed even higher than the Safavid ones. The Ottoman had six different patterns found in *Sûrah* 1 and the beginning of *Sûrah* 2 and these were placed roughly at the centre of the notional base lines of the text. Tiny fine lines resembling plant shoots were drawn at the outer ring or circles of *âyah*-markers in the Ottoman period. On the other hand, small circles placed at different intervals occur on the outer ring of Safavid *âyah*-markers whereas there are almost none in Mughal Qur'âns. Some bold and exotic designs can be seen in Ottoman Qur'âns, such as the flame-like motif, in contrast to the rather tamer geometric, organic or plant designs in Safavid Qur'âns. In Mughal Qur'âns, the designs were rather modest so far as flower motifs were concerned and they were not as stimulating as the Safavid ones. Safavid marginal designs were never excessive nor under-decorated. The Ottoman style for these elements continued to be bold and heavy but the Mughal style of margin design was, rather unexpectedly, simpler than that of their counterpart to the west. Mughal marginal designs give more emphasis to the extended decorated lines at the top and bottom marginal designs. This seems to reflect an unequal amount of emphasis given to their overall decoration.

Finally, the research for this thesis has also uncovered rare examples of illuminated Qur'âns that contained depictions of animals and human figures. The prohibition of representational images or figurative painting in Islamic religious art is a widely known fact, yet there are examples of Islamic religious works of art that do depict such images. Unexpectedly enough, figurative subjects have also been found in at least three Qur'âns. The first example is in a Qur'ân in the Glasgow University Library collection, datable to the late 17th or early 18th century and originating probably from Persia. It comprises animals and plant motifs within the text block of every single folio of the Qur'ân. The second and third examples were published by

Sotheby's in 1978 and 1981. They contain human figures, animals and flying angels. There is a no doubt a logical explanation for this, but until proper research has been carried out experts, the truth of the matter will not appear. Another area that demands further research is the degree of shared decorative vocabulary found in Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns.

This thesis may fittingly conclude with an expression of admiration for the genius of Safavid artists in the field of Qur'ânic art. The technical perfection in their creative work seems to have been unsurpassed by other artists. Even though their predecessors, such as the Mamlûks, had already depleted the vocabularies of illuminated Qur'âns, Safavid artists were still able to produce subtle innovations that in some respects surpassed the work of their predecessors. They observed the unwritten regional customs and practices, the *âdâb* and *ʿâdah*, in copying the Qur'ân, adhered to the strict rules of the structure and content of the Qur'ân, and cherished and nurtured the tradition of Qur'ânic illumination and in their humble way they were able to produce effects of great grandeur in the physical form of the Holy Book. As the Messenger of God once said 'God is beautiful and He loves the beautiful'.

*Wa 'llâhu ʿalâm.*

## Note

After this thesis was finished, a copy of Y. Porter's book *Painters, Paintings and Books. An Essay on Indo-Persian Technical Literature, 12-19th Centuries* (New Delhi, 1994) came into my hands. Although the core material of this book is Indian rather than Persian, it nevertheless has much information that bears directly on Safavid Qur'âns, and all future research on such Qur'âns will have to take its findings into account.

## Appendix I

### List of scribes/illuminators

#### A. Safavid

##### 16th century

1. <sup>°</sup>Abdallâh al-Tabakh.
2. <sup>°</sup>Abdullâh.
3. <sup>°</sup>Abdullâh ibn Sultân Muḥammad al-Ḥarâwî.
4. <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Jabbâr ibn <sup>°</sup>Abd al-<sup>°</sup>Azîz.
5. Aḥmad ibn Ni<sup>°</sup>matallâh. Herât.
6. Ala' al-Dîn Tabrîzî.
7. <sup>°</sup>Alî Riza al-Abbâsî.
8. <sup>°</sup>Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqaddam (Karbala).
9. <sup>°</sup>Alî Riza al-<sup>°</sup>Abbâsî. Qazwîn.
10. Asadullâh ibn Muḥammad al-Kashânî.
11. Asdullâh al-Kirmânî.
12. Asadullâh ibn Muḥammad al-Kashânî.
13. Bâbâ al-Tabrîzî (illuminator).
14. Fatimah Sultân, daughter of Maqşûd <sup>°</sup>Alî.
15. Fath-allâh ibn Asad-allâh ibn Ḥusayn al-Ghafârî al-Kashânî.
16. Ḥabiballâh al-Katib al-Marâghî.
17. Ḥusain al-Shîrâzî.
18. Ḥusayn al-Fakhkhar al-Shîrâzî.
19. Jalâl al-Dîn Muḥammad.
20. Maḥmûd bin <sup>°</sup>Abdullâh bin <sup>°</sup>Alî al-Ghafârî.
21. Manşûr bin Muḥammad al-Shîrâzî.
22. Maqşûd <sup>°</sup>Alî al-Sharîf al-Tabrîzî al-Maftulband.
23. Muḥammad Asghâr b. Manşûr al-Ḥusainî (Mîr Munshi) (Bukhârâ).
24. Muḥammad Ḥusain ibn Muḥyi ('l-Dîn) al-Ḥarawî (Bukhârâ or Herât).
25. Muḥammad al-Kâtib al-Shîrâzî.
26. Muḥammad Qasîm ibn Mâlik Ḥusain Tûnî.
27. Muḥammad Mu<sup>°</sup>min bin <sup>°</sup>Abdullâh Murwârîd.
28. Muzaffar ibn Aḥmad ibn Muzaffar ibn Kamâl ibn <sup>°</sup>Iwad ibn Muzaffar ibn Shams  
al-Dîn Ḥassan Amirah ibn Nasir al-Dîn Muḥammad al-Ṭûşî.
29. Nizâm al-Dîn Maḥmûd.
30. Nowrûz Muḥammad ibn <sup>°</sup>Abdul-Baqî al-Bukhârî.



31. Nowruz Muḥammad ibn <sup>°</sup>Abdul-Bâqî al-Bukhârî.
32. Nûr al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Muḥyi al-Ḥarawî.
33. Nurullâh Muḥammad al-Lahîjî al-Jalânî.
34. Ruzbihan (Muḥammad) al-Tab<sup>°</sup>î al-Shîrâzî. Shîrâz. (Scribe and illuminator).
35. Tâqî al-Dîn Muḥammad ibn Mutahhar.

### 17th century

1. Aḥmad al-Nirîzî (Isfâhân).
2. Aḥmad al-Nirîzî.
3. <sup>°</sup>Abd Allâh ibn Muttalib Mustaufî al-Shîrâzî (illuminator).
4. <sup>°</sup>Abdûl Rahmân bin Safî<sup>°</sup>-allâh al-Saulashtî.
5. Abû Muḥammad Ibrâhîm Shîrâzî.
6. Aqa Muḥammad ibn Ziyâd al-Dîn al-Marâghî.
7. Ḥusain Waiz Kashifî.
8. Ibn Mirza Ibrâhîm Sayyid Aḥmad Ṭabtabâ'î.
9. <sup>°</sup>Imâd al-Dîn Ḥasan.
10. <sup>°</sup>Imâd al-Dîn Ḥassan ibn Ibrâhîm.
11. <sup>°</sup>Imâd al-Dîn Ḥasan (Shîrâz).
12. Maqşûd al-Tabrîzî.
13. Mîrza Aḥmad.
14. Mîrza Aḥmad al-Tabrîzî.
15. Muḥammad Ḥâshîm (al-Tayir).
16. Muḥammad Ibrâhîm al-Qumî.
17. Muḥammad Maḥdi al-Katib al-Mashâdî.
18. Muḥammad Riza al-Shîrâzî.
19. Muḥammad Zaman al-Ḥusainî al-Kirmânî.
20. Shagird

## B. Mughal

### 16th Century

1. Ibn <sup>°</sup>Alî Aḥmad al-Sharîf.
2. Muḥammad Asghâr ibn Manşûr al-Ḥusainî.

### 17th Century

1. Muḥammad Ḥusain Shîrâzî, North India.
2. Maqşûd <sup>°</sup>Alî.

3. Maqşûd.
4. Muḥammad Maḥdi al-Katib.
5. Muḥammad Rafî'a ibn Fathallâh al-Isfahânî.
6. Yar Muḥammad.

### **C. Ottoman**

#### **16th Century**

1. °Abdul °Alî Muḥammad Turbâtî.
2. °Abdullâh al-Qirîmî.
3. °Alî ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqqadam.
4. Al-Tabrîzî.
5. Darvish Muḥammad.
6. Dervish Meḥmed ibn Mustafa Dede ibn Ḥamdullâh. (Istanbul).
7. Dâwûd ibn °Abdullâh.
8. Haji Ḥusain.
9. Ḥamdullâh ibn al-Shaykh.
10. Ḥassan.
11. Iskandar ibn °Abdullâh.
12. Khân Aḥmad °Aşrî.
13. Maḥmud ibn °Abd al-Walî al-Daftârî.
14. Muḥammad bin °Abdullâh al-Nishâpûrî al-Anşarî.
15. Muḥammad ibn °Abdullâh al-Nishâpûrî.
16. Muḥammad ibn Rahmân al-Maghluwî.
17. Muştafa al-Ayyubî'.
18. Muştafa ibn Naşûḥ al-Selânîkî.
19. Najm al-Dîn.
20. Sulaiman, pupil of Selânîkî.
21. Ubaîd al-Maulavi.
22. °Uthmân.

#### **17th Century**

1. °Abdullâh ibn Mustafâ.
2. Darwish °Alî.
3. Darvish Maḥmûd ibn Bairam.
4. Dilaver ibn °Abdullâh Edirnavî.
5. Ḥâfîz ibn °Alî.

6. Hâfiz Khalil.
7. Hâfiz ʿUthmân.
8. Husain ibn Ramadân, a student of Darvish ʿAlî al-Imâm.
9. Ibrahim ibn al-Hajj ʿAbdûl-Qadîr al-Madânî.
10. Ibn Qasîm ʿAlî Mûnshî al-Nishâpûrî.
11. Ismaʿîl Wahbî, student of Shaikh Maḥmud Jamâl al-Dîn bin Shaikh Mustafa.
12. Jamîl al-Dîn (Murjân al-Islâmî).
13. Muḥammad ʿÂrif al-Rajâʾî.
14. Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî.
15. Muḥammad Dadeh ibn Muṣṭafa Dadeh ibn Ḥamdallâh (Ibn al-Shaykh).
16. Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafa.
17. Muḥammad ibn ʿUmâr (Arabzadeh)
18. Muṣṭafâ al-Hilmî.
19. Muṣṭafâ ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî (Belgrade).
20. Muṣṭafa ibn Husain.
21. Muṣṭafa ibn Maḥmûd.
22. Shaʿbân bin Muḥammad.
23. Sulaiman ibn ʿAlî al-Bahasânî.
24. ʿUthmân.
25. Sayyid Muḥammad al-Shâkir.
26. Al-Hajj Hâfiz Muḥammad Nûrî' (illuminator).

## Appendix II

### List of manuscripts

#### 16th Century

1. CBL Ms. 1540 (Arberry No. 153).
2. CBL Ms. 1544 (Arberry No. 154).
3. CBL Ms. 1534 (Arberry No. 155).
4. CBL Ms. 1558 (Arberry No. 156).
5. CBL Ms. 1525 (Arberry No. 157).
6. CBL Ms. 1531 (Arberry No. 158).
7. CBL Ms. 1537 (Arberry No. 159).
8. CBL Ms. 1538 (Arberry No. 160).
9. CBL Ms. 1542 (Arberry No. 161).
10. CBL Ms. 1545 (Arberry No. 162).
11. CBL Ms. 1547 (Arberry No. 163).
12. CBL Ms. 1548 (Arberry No. 164).
13. CBL Ms. 1539 (Arberry No. 165).
14. CBL Ms. 1524 (Arberry No. 169).
15. Khalili, QUR323.
16. Khalili, QUR56.
17. Khalili, QUR3.
18. Khalili, QUR114.
19. Khalili, QUR130.
20. Khalili, QUR251.
21. Khalili, QUR178.
22. Khalili, QUR198.
23. Khalili, QUR292.
24. Khalili, QUR111.
25. Khalili, QUR60.
26. Khalili, QUR441.
27. Khalili, QUR729.
28. Khalili, QUR215.
29. Khalili, QUR422.
30. Khalili, QUR231.
31. Khalili, QUR206.
32. Khalili, QUR625.
33. Khalili, QUR96.
34. Khalili, QUR50.
35. Or. 1342.
36. Or. 1341.
37. Or. 4945.
38. Or. 1340.
39. Add. 23, 252.
40. Or. 1209.
41. JRULM, 45[797].



42. JRULM, 43[705].
43. JRULM, 44[754].
44. JRULM, 49[1].
45. JRULM, 39[789].
46. LSOAS, Ms. 42579.
47. LSOAS, Ms. 25139.

**17th Century.**

1. CBL Ms. 1554 (Arberry No. 172)
2. CBL Ms. 1553 (Arberry No. 173)
3. CBL Ms. 1550 (Arberry No. 174)
4. CBL Ms. 1555 (Arberry No. 175)
5. Loth19.
6. Loth 21.
- 7.Or.4102.
8. Or.13279.

**18th Century.**

1. CBL Ms. 1561 (Arberry No. 177)
2. CBL Ms. 1572 (Arberry No. 179)
3. CBL Ms. 1571 (Arberry No. 178)
4. CBL Ms. 1573 (Arberry No. 180)
5. CBL Ms. 1579 (Arberry No. 181)
6. MS. GEN 1015.
7. MS. Euing 16.

## Appendix III

### List of the Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'āns (16th - 17th centuries) in the Christie's Catalogues (1973-93).

Year	Lot	Style	Size (mm)	Folio	Lines	Script	Place	Date	Scribe/illuminator
10.7.'75	217	O	630x485	n/s	n/s	n	Turkey	L.16/E.17C.	unknown
9.11.'77	68	S	385x265	362	13	n/m/rq	Shiraz	1550-1600	unknown
11.10.'79	76	O	402x260	362	13	n/m	n/s	c.1550	unknown
	77	O	88x42	295	15	n/m/rq	n/s	c.1550	unknown
	78	O	76x40	238	18	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
16.10.'80	12	O	117x82	433	13	n/t	n/s	16C.	Sulaiman, pupil of Selanîkî
	13	O	211x120	374	15	n/t	n/s	1588	al-Tabrizî
	15	O	362x245	228	14	n	n/s	c.1555-60	unknown
23.4.'81	100	S	300x183	328	15	n/t	Shiraz	1553	Ḥusain al-Shîrâzî
1.4.'82	161	O	242x165	27	9	n	n/s	1687	Ḥâfiz ibn 'Alî
4.7.'85	92	O	240x140	300	15	n	n/s	c.1550	unknown
25.11.'85	132	O	165x108	414	13	n	n/s	1680-1	Darvish Maḥmûd ibn Bairam
	106	S	324x240	2	7	m	n/s	c.1600	unknown
21.11.'86	86	S	324x235	312	12	n	Persia	c.1600	unknown
16.6.'87	86	O	237x159	393	11	n	n/s	1541	Muḥammad bin Abdullâh al-Nishâpûrî al-Anṣarî
24.11.'87	75	O	355x229	26	7	m	n/s	16C.	unknown
12.4.'88	70	S	235x152	347	12	n	Persia	L.16C.	Fatimâh Sultan, daughter of Maqṣûd Alî
	69	S	280x184	409	11	t/n	Qazwin	1586-7	'Alî Riza al-Abbâsî
	68	S	215x152	363	13	t/n	Persia	c.1500-50	unknown
	67	S	362x254	286	13	n	Persia	16C.	unknown
10.10.'89	315	S	178x121	511	n/s	t/n	Persia	16C.	unknown
	316	S	324x209	637	9	n	Persia	L.15/E.16C.	unknown
10.10.'89	317	S	279x200	226	15	n	Persia	16C.	Mansûr bin Muḥammad al-Shîrâzî
24.4.'90	167	S	162x110	476	11	t/n	Persia	1536-7	Muḥammad al-Katib al-Shîrâzî
	168	S	279x171	453	11	n/t	Persia	1657-8	Abû Muḥammad Ibrâhîm Shîrâzî
	170	S	330x235	334	15	t/n	Persia	16C.	unknown
9.10.'90	55	S	254x172	535	10	n	Persia	16C.	unknown
	56	S	356x248	257	6	t/n	Persia	16C.	Asdullâh al-Kirmânî
	64	O	311x222	30	7	m	n/s	16C.	unknown
23.4.'91	63	O	127x70	458	12	m	n/s	1565-6	Abdullâh al-Qirîmî
	64	S	95x50	344	14	n	Persia	16C.	unknown
	65	S	194x120	283	15	n/t	Persia	1672-3	Aqa Muḥammad bin Ziyad al-Dîn al-Marâghî.
10.10.'91	82	S	330x215	292	5	t/n/nq	Persia	c.1550	unknown
	83	S	353x246	15	3	t/n	Persia	L.16C.	unknown
	85	S	194x137	330	12	n	Persia	E.17C.	Maqṣûd al-Tabrizî
	86	O	280x190	20	9	n	n/s	E.16C.	Mustafa al-Ayyubî
	87	O	257x178	23	3	m/n	n/s	E.16C.	unknown
	49	O	108x70	446	11	n	n/s	L.17/E18C.	unknown
	50	O	127x79	324	13	n	n/s	1659-60	Muḥammad al-Balghrâdî
28.4.'92	65	S	222x127	386	13	m/n/t	Persia	c.1550	unknown

	67	S	220x134	15	12	n	n/s	16C.	unknown
	68	S	241x160	323	12	t/n	Persia	L16C.	unknown
22.10.'92	241	S	111x73	48	11	n	Persia	c.1570	unknown
	243	S	216x140	336	15	n/m	Persia	1567	Muḥammad Qasīm bin Mālik Ḥusain Tūnī
	244	S	216x134	308	15	n/m/nq	Persia	1560	Asadullāh bin Muḥammad al-Kashānī
	245	S	225x141	265	12	n/t	Persia	1550	unknown
	247	S	154x110	90	9	m	Persia	16C.	unknown
27.4.'93	34	S	190x104	494	11	t/n	Persia	1665-6	Muḥammad Zaman al-Ḥusainī al-Kirmānī
	35	S	246x157	236	15	m/t	Persia	L.16C.	unknown
	36	S	179x104	346	12	n	Persia	c.1580	unknown
	37	S	235x140	244	14	n	Persia	L.16C.	unknown
	40	O	92x53	51	12	n	n/s	c.1700	Ḥāfiẓ Khalīl
21.10.'93	49	S	182x111	399	13	n	Persia	1550	unknown
	47	S	280x165	421	12	n/nq/t	Persia	1583	Ala al-Dīn Tabrīzī
	50	S	560x338	404	11	n/t	Persia	E.16C.	unknown
	51	S	116x75	301	15	n	Persia	E.16C.	unknown
	53	S	83x54	241	11	n/t	Persia	17C.	unknown
28.11.'93	110	S	365x240	157	15	t/rq	Bukharā	c.1500	unknown
							/Herat		
	104	O	272x175	249	12	n	n/s	c.1650	Muṣṭafa ibn Ḥusain
24.11.'93	102	O	190x125	41	39	n	n/s	1694-5	Isma'īl Wahbī, student of sheikh
									Mahmūd Jamāl al-Dīn ibn Shaikh
									Muṣṭafa.

Key: S = Safavid, O = Ottoman and M = Mughal. n = *naskh*, t = *thuluth*; m = *muhaqqaq*; rq = *riqā'c*; tw = *tawqī'c* and nq = *nastā'liq*. n/s = not stated.

## Appendix IV

### List of the Safavid, Ottoman and Mughal Qur'âns (16th - 17th centuries) in the Sotheby's Catalogues (1973-93).

Year	Lot	Style	Size (mm)	Folio	Lines	Script	Place	Date	Scribe/illuminator
11.7.'73	391 M		251x148	415	12	n	India	L.17/18C.	unknown
	397 S		315x220	298	15	n	Persia	1550	unknown
14.4.'76	253 S		292x195	473	11	n	Persia	1596	unknown
2.5.'77	167 S		272x185	267	15	n	Tabriz	1550	Fath-allâh ibn Asad-allâh ibn Ḥusain al-Ghafârî al-Kashânî
3.5.'77	114 M		353x220	345	12	n	n/s	1602	Muḥammad Maḥdî al-Khatib
	115 M		170x102	335	13	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
10.10.'77	191 S		302x198	436	11	ry/n	Shiraz	1550-1600	unknown
	166 M		130x75	518	11	n	n/s	1678	unknown
	167 M		215x162	32	12	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
9.10.'78	123 M		173x127	122	25	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
9.7.'79	116 O		170x103	1419	13	n	Turkey	1550-1600	unknown
	117 M		223x151	31	41	n	n/s	17/18C.	unknown
28.4.'81	279 O		199x133	22	10	n	n/s	1669	Da'wish`Alî
	287 M		167x107	247	17	n	n/s	1671	Muḥammad Rafî'a ibn Fathallâh al-Isfahânî.
9.10.'79	297 M		167x98	371	15	n	n/s	1650-1700	unknown
13.10.'81	274 S		248x158	50	11	m/n	Persia	1500-1550	attributed to Yâqût al-Musta'simî
	275 O		252x161	386	13	n	n/s	1568	Iskandar bin Abdullâh
5.6.'82	116 O		245x180	27	7	m	n/s	1550	unknown
	187 O		375x275	270	14	n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
19.4.'83	170 O		400x295	341	11	n	n/s	16C.	unknown
	172 O		375x275	270	14	nq/t	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
	175 M		350x260	870	7	n	n/s	c.1700	unknown
20.6.'83	177 O		131x80	300	13	n	n/s	1686	Muḥammad ibn Umâr (Arabzadeh)
17.10.'83	283 O		110x70	303	15	n	n/s	1517	Ubaid al-Maulavi
	284 O		230x145	465	11	n	n/s	3rd Q, 16C.	unknown
	289 O		312x200	383	13	n	n/s	1645	unknown
	290 O		196x130	402	12	n	n/s	1676	Abdullâh ibn Muṣṭafa
	292 O		177x120	269	12	n	n/s	17C. & L.	unknown
16.4.'84	191 O		350x230	272	15	n	n/s	3rd Q. 16C.	unknown
	192 O		375x275	270	14	n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
	193 O		355x240	24	7	n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
	194 O		290x185	336	13	n	n/s	E.17C.	unknown
	195 O		312x200	383	13	n	n/s	1645	unknown
	196 O		700x410	391	11	n	n/s	1687	Sulaiman ibn Alî al-Bahâsânî
15.10.'84	252 S		175x110	358	12	n	Persia	1509	Abdullâh
	256 O		335x215	386	12	n	n/s	3rd Q, 16C.	unknown
	259 O		149x90	310	15	n	Palestine	1677	Ibrahîm ibn al-Hajî Abdûl-Qadîr al-Madânî
	260 S		220x140	300	15	n	Persia	1688	Muḥammad Hâshim (al-Tayir)
	261 O		195x122	303	15	n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
15.4.'85	201 O		36x60	453	12	n	n/s	E.16C.	unknown



	202	O	68x42	546	10	n	n/s	16C.	unknown
	203	S	997x285	370	13	m	Persia	16C.	unknown
	204	S	242x165	302	15	n	Bukhar	16C.	unknown
	205	O	248x178	23	9	n	n/s	16C.	unknown
	208	S	261x173	356	12	n	Persia	16C.	unknown
	209	S	230x1572	278	12	n	Persia	1572	Maḥmūd ibn Abdullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Ghafārī
	210	S	270x175	354	15	t/n	Bukhar	1590	Nowrūz Muḥammad ibn Abdūl-Baqī al-Bukhārī
	211	O	334x225	301	13	n	n/s	c.1590	unknown
	215	S	300x208	335	12	n	Persia	E.16C.	unknown
	216	O	277x180	483	11	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
	218	M	310x200	20	12	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
	221	M	178x105	492	11	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
	223	S	233x142	502	11	t/n	Persia	1665	Muḥammad Zaman al-Husaini al-Kirmānī.
	224	M	291x190	421	10	n	n/s	1681	Maqṣūd Alī
	225	O	190x120	303	15	n	n/s	1687	Ibn Qasīm Alī Muhsin al-Nishāpūrī
	226	M	265x150	476	11	n	n/s	1688	Maqṣūd Alī
25.6.'85	31	O	112x72	344	12	n	n/s	1578	Abdūl-Alī Muḥammad Turbātī
	32	O	295x195	18	9	n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
	33	O	272x175	247	17	n	n/s	17C.	Muḥammad Dadeh ibn Muṣṭafa Dadeh ibn Ḥamdallāh (Ibn al-Shaykh)
	34	S	320x220	306	12	n	Herat	c.1600	unknown
	35	S	355x221	345	12	n	Persia	1602	Muḥammad Mehdi al-Katib al-Mashādī
21.11.'85	338	O	255x162	378	13	m/n	n/s	1550-1600	unknown
	339	O	150x90	317	15	n	n/s	1587	Hasan
	340	O	334x225	301	13	n	n/s	c.1590	unknown
	342	S	362x234	309	10	n/nq	Persia	E.17C.	Abdūl Rahmān bin Safī-allāh al-Saulashtī.
	343	M	170x100	518	10	n	n/s	17C.	unknown
	346	O	170x120	382	13	n	n/s	17C.	Uthmān
	347	O	235x150	420	13	n	n/s	1662	Dervish ʿAlī
22.5.'86	294	S	186x120	403	13	m/n	Persia	c.1500	unknown
	295	S	377x267	300	15	n	Persia	E.16C.	unknown
	296	O	260x170	23	9	m	n/s	E.16C.	unknown
	298	M	268x177	440	10	n	n/s	2nd Q.16C.	unknown
	299	S	162x100	261	14	n	Persia	c.1530	unknown
	300	O	255x162	378	13	m/n	n/s	1500-1600	unknown
	301	S	350x240	248	14	n	Herat	L.Q.16C.	unknown
	310	O	154x90	359	15	n	n/s	1657	Jamāl al-Dīn (Murjan al-Islāmī)
20.11.'86	320	S	313x225	342	12	n	Persia	1567	Abdullāh ibn Sultan Muḥammad al-Haravi
	322	O	415x285	278	15	m	n/s	1592	Khan Ahmad Asrī
	326	O	161x103	317	15	n	n/s	1671	Hāfiz Uthmān
1.6.'87	91	S	132x90	419	12	n	n/s	1518	Muḥammad Mu'mīn ibn Abdullāh Murwārīd
	98	O	228x142	302	15	n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
	100	O	352x245	282	13	n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
14.12.'87	232	S	267x166	312	14	n	Shiraz	1632	Imād al-Dīn Ḥasan
	234	M	330x230	345	12	m	n/s	1550-1600	Ibn ʿAlī Ahmad al-Sharīf

	235 S	282x195	416	12 n	Herat	1500-1600	Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Muḥyi al-Haravi
	236 M	325x202	437	12 n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
	238 O	227x150	420	11 n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
	239 O	200x143	424	11 n	n/s	L.17C.	Muṣṭafa ibn Maḥmūd
11.4.'88	115 S	347x205	378	12 n	n/s	1591	Nurallāh Muḥammad al-Lahjīf al-Jalānī
	117 O	219x145	305	15 n	n/s	1612	Dilaver ibn Abdullāh Edirnavi
	120 O	146x95	304	15 n	n/s	1677	Muḥammad ibn Muṣṭafa
10.10.'88	174 O	240x160	28	8 n	n/s	16C.	unknown
	177 M	165x113	589	11 n	n/s	1670	Yar Muḥammad
10.4.'89	197 S	370x255	294	15 m/t	n/s	c.1550	unknown
	204 O	352x236	19	11 t/n	n/s	1571	Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muqqadam
	205 O	373x265	177	17 n/t	n/s	c.1575	unknown
	206 O	97x65	149	23 gh	n/s	1633	Shābān ibn Muḥammad
	223 O	197x132	375	12 m	n/s	1550	Najm al-Dīn
13.10.'89	93 O	240x160	20	11 n	n/s	c.1510-20	attributed to Ḥamdullāh ibn al-Shaykh
	94 M	304x185	392	11 n	Bukhari	1558	Muḥammad Asghār ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥusainī
	101 O	235x150	420	13 n	n/s	1662	Dervish *Alī
	103 O	193x131	23	11 n	n/s	1670	*Uthmān
	104 O	164x105	418	13 n	n/s	1679	Dervish Maḥmud ibn Birām
	107 M	267x152	475	11 n	n/s	1688	Maqṣūd
	108 O	142x98	55	11 n	n/s	1697	*Uthmān
26.4.'90	155 S	197x130	397	12 n/t	Persia	E.16C.	unknown
	156 O	210x140	368	13 n	n/s	c.1515	Ḥamdullāh (Ibn al-Shaykh)
	157 S	340x220	364	12 n	Shiraz	c.1560-70	unknown
	158 O	156x106	254	17 n	Mecca	1579	Haji Ḥusain
	159 M	170x101	528	10 n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown
	161 O	240x155	363	13 n	n/s	L.17C.	unknown
12.10.'90	212 O	230x152	24	9 n	n/s	c.1500	attributed to Shaykh Ḥamdullāh
	215 O	162x105	359	14 n/t	n/s	16C.	unknown
	222 S	290x190	341	11 n	n/s	1658	unknown
26.4.'91	242 O	240x160	20	11 n	n/s	c.1510-20	attributed to Ḥamdullāh ibn al-Shaykh
11.10.'91	920 S	178x114	519	11 m/n	Persia	c.1560-80	unknown
	922 O	81x60	431	12 n	n/s	16C.	unknown
22.10.'92	581 M	483x320	352	12 n/t	n/s	c.1590	unknown
28.4.'93	91 S	254x158	448	11 m/n/t	Herat	1550	unknown
	92 O	290x190	20-26	9 n	n/s	1595	Dervish Muḥammad
	95 S	297x190	407	10 n/t	Shiraz	1550	unknown
	99 S	335x230	341	15 m/n/t	Persia	1550-1600	unknown
	108 O	230x141	411	12 n		1645	Muṣṭafa ibn Muḥammad, pupil of Muḥammad al-Balghrādī (from Belgrade).
	114 O	270x185	28	7 n	n/s	c.1500	Ḥamdullāh (Ibn al-Sheikh).
22.10.'93	44 O	165x113	488	11 n	n/s	1591	Maḥmud ibn Abd al-Walī al-Daftārī
	45 O	133x75	374	13 n	n/s	1565	Muḥammad ibn Rahmān al-Maghīūwī
	46 S	335x220	324	12 m	Persia	15&16C.	*Abdallāh al-Tabakh
	48 S	327x220	289	14 n	Persia	1500	unknown
	51 S	322x225	314	12 n	Persia	L.16C.	unknown
	52 S	228x150	383	12 n	Persia	1550	unknown
	59 O	156x80	513	12 n	n/s	L.16C.	unknown

Key: S = Safavid, O = Ottoman and M = Mughal. n = *naskh*, t = *thuluth*; m = *muhaqqaq*; rq = *riqāʿ*; tw = *tawqīʿ*; nq = *nastaʿliq*, ry = *rayḥān* and gh = *ghubārī*. n/s = not stated.

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